

This morning, we are in the fourth week of a sermon series I am calling “Savior and Lord,” looking at what it means to relate to Jesus as both Savior – the one who died for our sins to give us eternal life – and Lord – the one who we follow and emulate. We are working our way through Mark’s gospel in this series. Mark was Peter’s traveling companion, and the Gospel of Mark is mainly Peter’s eyewitness testimony of Jesus (Peter was first known as Simon before Jesus changed his name). It is also the first gospel written, around 60-70 AD. So far, Jesus has begun to call disciples to him and shown himself to be one who teaches and heals with a divine authority, and run into a number of conflicts with the religious leaders that have left them wanting him dead.

Before we continue in Mark 3, I want to mention a concept popularized by C.S. Lewis that many of you are probably familiar, the trilemma. This is how it goes:

*“I’m trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really silly thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must never say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic, on the level of the man who says he is a poached egg, or else he would be the devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman, or something worse. You can shut him up as a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon, or you may fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about him being a great moral teacher. He did not leave that open to us, and he did not intend to... Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic nor a fiend: and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God.”*

Lewis makes the argument that if you recognize that you are reading eyewitness accounts, and you take seriously the claims of Jesus, you see that He can’t be just a moral teacher. We are only in chapter 3 – up to this point, what has Jesus claimed through his words or actions?

- God spoke from heaven and called him His Son
- He claimed that the kingdom of God is near
- He taught the Scriptures with authority, not like the teachers
- He had authority over demons
- He had authority over sickness
- He claimed to have authority to forgive sins

- He called Himself the Son of Man
- He claimed to be Lord of the Sabbath

This morning we are going to be reading Mark 3:7-35. As you listen, see how Lewis was correct: the people see Jesus in one of three ways: liar, lunatic, or Lord.

**Mark 3:7-35** - *Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. <sup>8</sup> When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. <sup>9</sup> Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. <sup>10</sup> For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. <sup>11</sup> Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." <sup>12</sup> But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was. <sup>13</sup> Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. <sup>14</sup> He appointed twelve-- designating them apostles--that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach <sup>15</sup> and to have authority to drive out demons. <sup>16</sup> These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); <sup>17</sup> James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); <sup>18</sup> Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot <sup>19</sup> and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. <sup>20</sup> Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. <sup>21</sup> When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind." <sup>22</sup> And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons." <sup>23</sup> So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? <sup>24</sup> If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. <sup>25</sup> If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. <sup>26</sup> And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. <sup>27</sup> In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house. <sup>28</sup> I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. <sup>29</sup> But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin." <sup>30</sup> He said this because they were saying, "He has an evil spirit." <sup>31</sup> Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. <sup>32</sup> A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you." <sup>33</sup> "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked. <sup>34</sup> Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!" <sup>35</sup> Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."*

### First, liar:

<sup>22</sup> And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons." <sup>23</sup> So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? <sup>24</sup> If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. <sup>25</sup> If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. <sup>26</sup> And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. <sup>27</sup> In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house. <sup>28</sup> I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. <sup>29</sup> But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin." <sup>30</sup> He said this because they were saying, "He has an evil spirit."

Jesus has become so popular and controversial that the teachers of the law come from Jerusalem to check him out. They accuse him of being a liar, claiming that he is not really the Son of God, but that he is lying about an identity, because he is actually an agent of Satan and possessed by demons. They can not disprove the exorcisms, so they instead argue that Jesus is drawing on an evil power in order to do what he is doing. Jesus' reply to them is that their argument makes no sense. **Why would Satan wage war against his own followers?** Beyond that argument, the witness of Jesus' life would indicate that He is not evil. How could Jesus be evil if what he is doing is bringing life and love and healing to everyone He meets?

Jesus goes on to explain what is really happening. Satan is the strong man whose kingdom is reigning on earth.

**1 John 5:19** - *We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.*

But the kingdom of heaven has broken in, and Jesus is tying up the strong man so that he can redeem and restore that which was stolen.

**Hebrews 2:14-15** - *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-- that is, the **devil**-- <sup>15</sup> and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

*Colossians 2:15* - And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public **spectacle** of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

*Colossians 1:13-14* - For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

On the cross, Jesus destroyed the power of Satan, binding him and saving us from slavery to Satan and sin through His death on our behalf. Jesus is our Savior, rescuing us from death.

Jesus levels an accusation against them, starting with “I tell you the truth.” Not “Thus saith the Lord,” but “I say to you with authority.” Jesus says that they are blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. This means that they are attributing to Satan the work of God. **The unforgiveable sin is ongoing, continual rejection of the witness of the Holy Spirit to the divinity and saviorhood of Christ.** It is the perversion in the heart that chooses to call light darkness and darkness light.

If you are worried that you have committed it, then you haven't.

So to the claim that Jesus was a malevolent liar trying to deceive the people, the answer is no, he is far too good for that.

**Secondly, the charge of being a lunatic.**

<sup>20</sup> Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. <sup>21</sup> When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

<sup>31</sup> Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. <sup>32</sup> A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you." <sup>33</sup> "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked. <sup>34</sup> Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!" <sup>35</sup> Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

Jesu's family comes to take charge of him, to bring him back home, because they think he has lost his mind. They hear what he is saying and doing and think that he has gone crazy.

As an aside, please note that Jesus has a mother and brothers. Mary was not a perpetual virgin. In another passage, it even names his brothers:

**Matthew 13:54-58** - *Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. <sup>55</sup> "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? <sup>56</sup> Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" <sup>57</sup> And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor." <sup>58</sup> And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.*

One of his brothers, James, became the leader of the church in Jerusalem, and wrote the New Testament book of James. But at this point in time, James thought his brother was crazy.

But the fact is that they recognize the truth that Lewis points out: Jesus is not just a good teacher. He is claiming outlandish things. Either he is actually God in human form, or he is crazy. And since they changed his diapers and knew him as a teenager, they are betting he's not God. As the townspeople said, "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Don't we know his family?"

Jesus ends by proclaiming that the spiritual family of God takes precedence over even his own nuclear family, because it is an eternal family.

<sup>32</sup> *A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you." <sup>33</sup> "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked. <sup>34</sup> Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! <sup>35</sup> Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."*

He is not rejecting his family. He upheld the importance of honoring your parents elsewhere in the gospels, and at the end of his life he made sure his mother was taken care of.

**John 19:26-27** - *When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," <sup>27</sup> and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.*

But this passage is a challenge to us, because our nuclear family can easily become an idol, something we place ahead of God and His family. According to Jesus, as important as our nuclear family is, our real family is much bigger than that.

In other places, Jesus was even stronger in his language:

**Matthew 10:35-38** - *For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law--<sup>36</sup> a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'<sup>37</sup> "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;<sup>38</sup> and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.*

He taught that following him may mean losing family:

**Mark 10:28-30** - *Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!"<sup>29</sup> "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel<sup>30</sup> will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields-- and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.*

And he also taught that sometimes believing in the gospel will cause division in families:

**Mark 13:11-13** - *Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup> "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.<sup>13</sup> All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.*

This is a really challenging thing for us to consider. We may think of the Christian faith as all about family values, but here Jesus tells us that our true family consists of more than our nuclear family, but all of our brothers and sisters in the faith. We can be so concerned about providing for, caring for, and spending time with our nuclear family, while Jesus is proclaiming that family is not just about flesh and blood but is about those who have been adopted into God's family. **If there is an elderly widow in need, that is your grandmother. If there is someone in the**

hospital, that is your brother. If there is a young man struggling with life, that is your son. How does it change things to look at each other that way?

Serving in the nursery is caring for your sister's kids so she can worship. Teaching Sunday School is helping your sons and daughters come to know Jesus. Gathering on a Sunday is a family reunion every Sunday. And evangelism is bringing more into the family.

Back to the original question: Is Jesus a lunatic? Would a lunatic be so full of goodness? Would he be so loving that he would sacrifice his own life for others? I don't think so.

### Others recognized him as Lord.

In the beginning of this section, Jesus is continuing his preaching, healing, and deliverance ministry, proclaiming the kingdom of God through word and deed. Crowds from all over are coming to be healed by Him. Evil spirits recognize him for who he is and fall down before him. And then out of the multitudes of men and women who are following Him, Jesus appoints twelve apostles. Why twelve? Harkens back to the twelve tribes of Israel. This is the foundation of the new people of God, both Jew and Gentile.

*Matthew 19:28 - Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."*

And he gives them the authority to preach and drive out demons.

The call is still to discipleship. If Jesus is not a liar or a lunatic, then He is who He claimed to be, the Lord of heaven and earth. God in human form. To call Him Lord is to enter into a relationship where He is not only your Savior but your leader. The call is to leave everything and follow Him. Your life is about His will now, not your own. You can not say "No, Lord," only "Yes, Lord" or "No." If He is Lord, then you follow Him. The call is to live for His kingdom and not your own, for His family, for His glory. Live for His kingdom as we do battle against the kingdom of Satan, taking back what He has stolen.

He is good, and He is not a liar. Everything He speaks is truth. How is He calling you to obey Him and follow Him today?

**Hebrews 4:6-7** - *It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience. <sup>7</sup> Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."*