Title: Promise of Mercy and a Solemn Warning

Description: In this Sunday morning message from Mark 3:22-30, Pastor Anthony Kim of Calvary Road Baptist Church opens one of the most solemn passages in Scripture, where scribes from Jerusalem watch Jesus cast out devils and declare that He hath Beelzebub. Jesus answers their slander with two parables, that a kingdom or a house divided against itself cannot stand, and shows that He is the One who binds the strong man and sets Satan's captives free. Then come a promise of mercy, that all sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and a solemn warning, that he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness. Drawing on Leviticus, Matthew 12 and the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, the message comforts anyone afraid of having committed the unpardonable sin that a heart still open to Christ has not committed it, and urges every hearer to receive His forgiveness today before the heart grows hard.

Transcript:

We come this morning to one of the most sobering solemn passages of all of holy scripture in Mark 3:22-30. We're going to see the Lord Jesus stand at the center of intense spiritual warfare. We saw previously multitudes were pressing upon him. Miracles of healing were being performed by the Lord Jesus and demons were being cast out by the absolute authority of the Lord Jesus. Yet in the midst of these breathtaking displays of divine mercy, we see at our text this morning, hardness reach a terrifying climax. The scribes and the Pharisees, men who knew the letter of the law, stood directly in the sight of the Lord Jesus, witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit and declared looking at him face to face that Jesus was casting demons by the power of the devil.

Please stand as we hear the words of the Lord Jesus as recorded now in Mark 3 and we'll be in verse 22 to verse 30. "And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils. And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in

danger of eternal damnation: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit." This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

We're going to examine four vital truths from this passage this morning, revealing what happens to individuals that are hardened to the truth of who Jesus is. And then we're going to see the illogical accusations toward Jesus's power. And then from there, we're going to see the promise of mercy from the Lord Jesus. And then concluding with a solemn warning of eternal damnation by blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

Let's notice in verse 22, the arrival of the scribes we see here, which came down from Jerusalem. These were not local uneducated bystanders. As we've been going through this text, we know that they were highly educated scholars that they were legal experts and authorities of some sort of their religious group and they were dispatched from the city of Jerusalem to now investigate the Lord Jesus. And these scribes were men dedicated to preserving their human traditions. Remember they were all about oral laws and it comes from their own book called the Mishnah, and they were offended because Jesus did not honor their man-made legalistic rules. We saw that back in the Sabbath situation, right? But when we get to Mark 7:1-13, which I will not read for the sake of time, but when we get there, I will in several weeks from now, I'll just share with you that Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and scribes of elevating man-made religious traditions above the actual commands of God, resulting in total hypocrisy and their empty religion.

And now we see the Pharisees and the scribes here in this text that they were interpreters of the law of the Old Testament and led them to this moment where they are just full of rage, full of jealousy and hatred that had grown so deep that they formed dark alliances to then destroy the Lord Jesus. And their abuse was grossly violating the law of God. We shall see.

And let me just kind of take a side step here. It's estimated that the Pharisees and scribes added thousands of oral rules from the time that they were in the Old Testament to now in the New Testament. And there were far too many to track, right? Think of tracking all those oral traditions in your mind because after all they were orally given. You couldn't write it down as it were. It's not like today where we have cell phones where we have gadgets where we can retain so much information. Think about it. And yet they were so deluded to think that people can remember let alone them themselves. In fact, they were contradicting themselves as we recall when we went through the Sabbath illustration. And so, we're at a phase where they are not obeying their own

oral traditions. And the Lord Jesus then rebukes them for their foolishness.

The Lord Jesus gave an indictment of the scribes and Pharisees. And we see this from Matthew 23. He says these, I'm just going to lift up verse 4 from that passage. He says, "For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne," we mean to carry these oral traditions, "and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." So there you go. No obedience even to their own oral traditions. This is hypocrisy, right?

And so notice now going back to our text in Mark, he moves rapidly past certain details and he turns immediately to the allegation leveled by the scribes upon their arrival and Mark records the slander spoken directly against the Lord Jesus. Look down with me of their evil accusation in verse 22. "He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils."

And I'm going to bring now some understanding of some level of detail that help us to see why they're at this point saying these words. The text is from Matthew 12:22 and also in Luke 11:14 records how a demon-possessed man who was unable to speak was brought to the Lord Jesus and he cast out the evil spirit. Matthew 12:22 says this, "Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb," couldn't speak, "and he healed him," Jesus healed him, "insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?"

So the point of the multitude was they couldn't deny that this was a miracle that just took place. And the crowds were amazed by the words there. And they wondered, is not this the son of David? And they were questioning whether Jesus is then the long awaited Messiah, the savior and king as God promised King David. That's why they said these words. After all, he's a descendant from his royal line, the Lord Jesus of King David, who will then rule his throne forever. And the text there is 2 Samuel 7:12-16. And so the first century Jewish belief was the son of David was a direct title for the Messiah. So they're saying, "Is this the Messiah?"

In other words, however, the scribes resorted to the ultimate slander in Mark. They claimed that Jesus was possessed by Beelzebub. Now, let me give you the history behind this word because it wasn't always Beelzebub. History goes back to a name originated by Baal-zebub. And this was a Philistine deity worshiped in the city of Ekron whose name roughly translates to the Lord of the flies. Just think swarming insects covering a dead corpse. And that was

the result of what we see in 2 Kings chapter 1, verse 2. Bring the Lord of the flies. And so later writers altered the name to Beelzebul. All right. So we're not yet there with Beelzebub, but Beelzebul, which is a name for Lord of Dung. Lord of Dung. So a deliberate if you haven't seen it is insulting and mocking the very pagan worship of foreign deities. Remember this is a Philistine deity.

Now the alteration that we see here now in the New Testament with the use of the word Beelzebub is then another name for Satan himself. So this is where we have arrived with the word Beelzebub equating the Lord Jesus Christ to Satan himself who is a chief spiritual enemy of God. Right? We see the name the father of lies saying Jesus is the father of lies. What an evil accusation.

And they argued that Jesus drove out demons using authority of the prince of devils. As we see in the text, this forest accusation was at this stage the strongest attack the scribes and Pharisees could come up with. When men reject God's truth, they will call light darkness and darkness light.

So Jesus responded to their accusation at once, turning their argument on its head. Look down with me in verses 23-26. I will not read the whole text, but I want us to lift out here from the text verse 23. This is how the Lord responds to their wicked slander. "And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?"

Jesus does not flee, but rather he calls his accusers directly to himself from the crowd. He's saying, "Come closer. Let me tell you something very important." And he's going to expose their foolishness, their argument, and show that they are illogical with their accusation. He's going to present two parables here.

First, we see in verse 24, a divided kingdom. He goes on and says, "And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand." And then the second, a divided house. "And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand." Both parables make the same point. Whether it is a nation or a family household, internal conflicts brings a total collapse.

And so Jesus applies this universal principle to Satan's realm in verse 26. Look down with me there. He says, "And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end." But hath an end. If Satan were empowering Jesus, as it were, to cast out his own evil spirits, Satan would be actively then destroying his own kingdom. That's what he's saying here. And

so, Satan's forces do not work against each other. He's implying this. No, they're working together for what purpose? They're united in their desire to enslave and destroy human souls. They're working together in that purpose.

Think about it. What has been Jesus been doing? Healing, casting out demons, not destroying, but giving life. So he's flipping their argument on its head. And so he says, in essence, the scribes accusations are not only evil, but it was entirely absurd. Right? And the conclusion is clear. It would be irrational and self-defeating for Satan to cast out his own demons, thereby working against his main objective, his evil purpose of destroying souls.

So then if Satan were doing this as the Pharisees claimed his kingdom would collapse immediately and if he acted like this it would be the end of Satan as he says he would be finished. So Jesus is not casting out demons by the authority of the rulers of demons. No, his miracles are performed by the power of God. Amen.

Jesus provides an additional rebuttal. He says he's going to go into this now even more. It's like, "All right, you now have put yourself in full scene and full color as it were." He's going to go and rebuttal even stronger and more clearly that his authority over unclean spirits is rather done in a clear powerful work of the Holy Spirit. And he's going to give an illustration here in verse 27 first. So he says, "No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house."

So here's the analogy. Let's start with the strong man. Who is the strong man in the text? It's Satan. Satan who holds fallen humanity and its spiritual and holding them captive by his demonic practices. And then we go on to the strong man's house. This is Satan's domain of darkness on this earth. As we know from other texts, he's the prince of the power of this air. For a moment, God in his sovereignty is allowing him to do what he wishes, but there will be an end to that. And then we go on to the goods and the property. This is the precious souls of people held captive under demonic power over sin. And then fourth, the one who binds. This is the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

And let us now with those understandings go back to the text and we see that far from working along alongside Satan, the Lord Jesus was actively conquering his domain through his victory over temptation. As we saw at the very beginning of the introduction to Mark in the wilderness, he defeated Satan there and we see the continuation of that by all of his powerful ministry

on earth and then his authoritative declarations that we see again and again and again that when he says something things happen that no man could do except the Messiah. And that's the Lord Jesus Christ now here binding the strong man once and for all. He's the only one that can bind the devil. Not any human being. Never fool yourself to thinking as many people today say in the name of Jesus or name of so and so I cast you out. No, only Jesus can do that. Only Jesus can do that.

So every time Jesus cast out a demon, he was setting a captive free, a soul free from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear son Jesus. Right? So he fear and he demonstrates this by his arrival, his physical arrival here on earth, displaying his very power. So Jesus has come to bind Satan, plunder his domain, and then rescue souls, rescue souls of men and women. And here, if it's not said enough, Jesus is infinitely, infinitely stronger than Satan. We should take that away from this text.

You see, this binding enables Jesus to redeem once demon-possessed souls held captive by his domain, the devil, and bringing them into his kingdom. That is a spiritual work. It's not a strategy. It's not something that you can make up in your mind, I made a decision to trust Jesus. No, this is a spiritual work from one kingdom to another. You can't do that. Can you reach your soul and carry yourself to another kingdom? No. Absolutely not.

So now let's look more carefully then at verses 28 to verse 30. He goes on, this is Mark recording for the first time a statement that Jesus will go on making time and time again. This word verily or truly. This is the first time Mark records this declarative divine authoritative statement. And so he says Jesus says, "All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme." So let's just stay in that text. He introduces the word again, "Verily I say unto you."

This is the Lord Jesus giving a promise of mercy. Even again, I want you to notice through the text how he's being merciful to the scribes and Pharisees. He gives them an answer so that they would have an opportunity to correct themselves. You see, that's the Lord Jesus Christ. Even his worst of all enemies, he still will give mercy after mercy after mercy. This is just another instance of his promise of mercy.

In verse 28, he says this to them after the parables, all sins, I'm going to repeat it. "All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men." See what an extraordinary fountain of grace given. That's what grace is. They don't

deserve this. They don't deserve this. We don't deserve this kind of grace.

How many times can you remember if you're a believer in Christ in this room? This will be humbling. How many times have you said the name of Jesus inappropriately? How many times have you were angry at Jesus? You see, let's not be too harsh on the Pharisees and the scribes because after all, we all have the same heart. Let's not fool ourselves. This should be very humbling how the Lord Jesus Christ responds to the Pharisees and scribes and now to us.

See, no matter how shameful or shocking or deep a person's sins may be, God's mercy in Christ is sufficient to cleanse every truly repentant heart. Amen. Sin refers to again failing to meet God's standard. And as we know, God's standards is very high to the point where we see in Romans 3:23 highlighting the tragic reality. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." That's all of us. All of us has fallen short of God's holy standard.

So Jesus promises extends to the sons of men. Just simply means all humans. And I want you to get this because he makes this explicitly clear. Sons of men, humans, because why? The promise of forgiveness does not extend to the sins of Satan nor his demons. That's why he says this clearly, explicitly. No, you're the only ones. No demon will ever be forgiven, nor Satan.

I remember when I was street preaching one time and I was preaching on Revelation and one gentleman came up to me and he said, "Would Satan ever be forgiven?" And this was the text I shared with him and he didn't have anything to say. You see, this is what happens when the Lord Jesus speaks. This is a picture of the white throne judgment. No one will be left with an excuse. Everyone would be absolutely judged appropriately. Just like that picture of that man, he had no say. He's like, "Here, look."

So, the sons of men shall have an opportunity to have all of their sins forgiven. And Jesus explicitly makes clear that by all sins he includes a sin of blasphemy. And I'll get to that. He adds this blasphemy that they utter. You see that in the text. "Wherewith soever they shall blaspheme." But he holds that with a colon. I mean in the English language is a colon because the opposite is there's an exception. And we'll get to that.

But let me explain what blasphemy is. If for those who don't know what the word blasphemy is, blasphemy is, I want you to know what that means. You see, during the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus, blasphemy was regarded as one of the most grave transgressions of the law. It was root, it's rooted in the

original Greek language. This word signifies to utter slander, defile what is holy, or speak harmful words. I want you to get that key part. Defiling what is holy. Do you see how it arises in this text? Unclean for that which is clean. Unclean spirit with the clean spirit of the Holy Spirit. You see that?

But in the broader sense, this sin encompasses any speech, any conduct of one's life or an inner posture of the heart that profanes holy things of God. So at the core, it represents an intentional insult directed toward the Almighty himself. This is a grave transgression of the law.

The absolute seriousness of speaking scornfully against the holy name of God is solemnly laid out in the Old Testament scriptures which I would read now to you from the book of Leviticus. Here it is. "And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall be put to death." Leviticus 24:16.

Notice the repetition. Put to death twice. Again, when things are repeated in the Hebrew language is for emphasis. This is serious.

But thank God. Thank God the Lord Jesus Christ, he comes and says, "I'm going to do something." And what does he do? Ephesians 1:7 says this, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Grace after grace after grace, we were supposed to be put to death according to the Old Testament law. Every time you blasphemed the name of God, you were to be put to death. That's grace. Do you see that? Ephesians 1:7, blood he sacrificed so that we don't have to die. This is great comfort to anyone who has sinned against or blasphemed the name of Jesus.

However, in verse 29, we introduce the most solemn warning in all of holy scripture, as I mentioned in the introduction. Look down with me. This is a transitional verse from verse 28. "But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." And then Mark adds, "Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit," that it was done an unclean spirit.

So what is then the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost? You may ask. The gospel Matthew parallels account this section of our verse and recounts an event that Jesus adds additional warning to Mark 3:29. And let me read that to you so that you understand the full context of this text. Matthew records,

"And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."

So then the term son of man is the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's found in Daniel 7:13-14. He uses the word son of man repeatedly saying he's the Messiah. He's the Messiah. He's the Messiah. So here Jesus distinguishes between speaking against the son of man himself, the Messiah, and speaking against the Holy Spirit, again interchangeably used with the word Holy Ghost. So he explains that while speaking against the Messiah can be forgiven, blasphemy against the Holy Ghost will not be forgiven.

So our Lord Jesus uttered these words to signify that individuals who initially rejected him as Messiah, even those involved in condemning him to the cross, could then subsequently find true repentance and receive full forgiveness. This is truly remarkable. And we actually see this play out that those who were blaspheming the name of Jesus like the Pharisees, like the scribes, and even those that were around him at the cross, they were given opportunities for forgiveness.

Let me just share with you after 50 days at the day of Pentecost, he speaks to those that were blaspheming Jesus. Let me read it to you. Acts 20, rather Acts chapter 2, verses 36-41. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation." Verse 41. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized." Then they that gladly received his word were baptized.

And let me just stop there. Just think about the conviction that they had. Wait a minute. I just blasphemed over and over and over again. Wait, I'm going to receive forgiveness. That's joy. They don't deserve this grace, but yet God offers this grace.

And then verse 42. Verse 42. Rather verse 41. Continuing. "And the same day," the same day, "there were added unto them about three thousand

souls." That's a lot of people. Those are many of the followers of Jesus that might have turned away. But Jesus does not turn away from his lost sheep. So these are scriptures from the book of Acts demonstrating that at least some who had spoken against the son of man were forgiven. Again fulfilling Jesus's statement in Matthew 12:32, all sins that are against the man will be forgiven.

But when a person repeatedly hardens their heart against the Holy Spirit's conviction of their sin and explicitly attributes God's truth to Satan, you reject the very remedy for your sin. You realize that because without the spirit's work, there is no conviction. Without conviction, there is no repentance. Without repentance, there is never forgiveness. You become guilty and face eternal damnation.

Like Jesus said in Mark 3:29, the phrase never forgiveness when you see we should never use absolutes meaning we should never say never or always because we can't hold our promise. But when the Lord Jesus says always or never, he means it 100%. So when he says never forgiveness, he really means that. So the phrase again, it's a window of repentance that is closing if you continue to repeat associating the Holy Spirit with the spirit of demons. That's the worst offense. That's the worst offense.

Think of the Pharaoh of Exodus as an example. He hardened his heart against God again and again and again and again and again. Then what happened? Then God hardened his heart. Then God hardened his heart. We see that in Exodus 8:15. This is why this is solemn. This is serious.

The scribes and Pharisees saw the goodness of Christ. They saw it. They saw life changed or life that was made evident to them through the miracles he performed. But they still claimed them he was possessed by the devil.

Let me just end here. If you're sitting here this morning, this afternoon, and you've been tormented by the fear that you have committed this unpardonable sin, I want you to hear this, and I want you to hear this very carefully. If you are concerned that you have committed the unpardonable sin that will receive never forgiveness as Jesus said, God's mercy proves that you have not committed it yet. What do I mean by that? If you're here still listening and you have not closed your heart to the truth of Jesus, the door is still opened. The door is still opened to you. God's mercy is extended to you right now.

A soul that has blasphemed the Holy Spirit is completely hardened, completely shut, no longer can be opened. Are you that or are you someone that's saying, "I believe it. I for the first time, I believe this truth. I believe what Jesus is saying here. I believe that there's still mercy and grace for me." Then why not you come to trust him as your personal savior and lord. Receive the forgiveness of all your sin by the precious blood that he shed on the cross. He shed his blood for you so that you don't have to receive death. You don't have to receive death. You don't have to receive spiritual death. You can live in all eternity in a loving relationship with your savior.

See, that's what real love is, isn't it? Sacrificial. It's not an emotional thing. It's not something that you laugh and joke about. When God's spirit works in you, conviction is a serious thing. You have offended a holy God. He is not to be trifled with. He is to be taken by his word and you are to respond the way he wants you to respond.

He says to you, the Lord Jesus says to you, all sins will be forgiven. Do you believe that? Do you believe that he has paid for all of your sins on the cross? All of it? Or he said, "It is finished." You can't add or subtract from that truth.

I want to give you the opportunity to speak with me. If God is speaking to you right now, come and talk with me. If someone's waiting, just wait. I will speak to you. I just sense someone here this morning needed to hear this message, needed to hear the words of Jesus, who really hear directly from him.

Let me pray now. Father, it is come to a time when we have to close this portion of our worship.

But father, if there is someone here that needs to come to Jesus Christ as their personal savior and lord, who knows that they have sinned against you and you alone. Father, I pray that you would speak to them through thy still small voice through the very words of Christ that all sins shall be forgiven. I pray that they would receive this truth, that they would experience this promise and go on and live as Jesus said as a new creation in Christ Jesus. Father, it is a serious work that is completely on your sovereignty, your control. I pray that I have faithfully preached your word. I pray that people will come to know thy son Jesus Christ personally as their savior and lord today.

But I also do pray I cannot dismiss those that are believers here. The Lord Jesus said as well to those of us where he shown us how to pray, if you don't forgive your brothers and sisters in Christ, father shall not forgive you. And

we know this is a picture of fellowship.

And so if there is someone here that is a believer that feels their prayers are not reaching you, responses are not coming back, it may be because they have not sought forgiveness. And so I just pray for them as well. If you're speaking to them and showing their sins of sinning against a brother or sister in Christ. I pray that the Holy Spirit will show them that they must do it in order to receive back the fellowship of you, Father, where their spiritual plateau as it were will begin to come back to growth and that bearing of fruit as Jesus promised that he that abides in him, that abides in his commands and even and his words as I come to the text of the Lord's Prayer that this is how we will love you when we follow through with your words.

So, Father, please bless to these two ends that you may be glorified in all of this and Christ would be then exalted. Then our church will be Christ Church, the holy bride that is pure and presentable to you as a sweet smelling aroma in our prayers and in our lives. Well, thank you, Father, for all that you'll do here today. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.