



CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: Mark

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The Unforgivable Sin

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It's always a fun day when we do this once a year. What a blessing! There's just such a simple purity to worshipping with the children and in front of the children as their examples, but also to watch their little tender hearts begin to take shape as well. Let's go ahead and begin to receive our offerings.

While we're doing that, I just have a couple of announcements. The most important one is the first one, so pay very close attention to this announcement. This is the very first Kids' Worship Sunday in the history of our church (and we do it every year) where I stand before you as a grandpa, so I have joined the club.

I want you to see my little grandson, this little bundle of love, the little bundle of blubber right there. He's only a day or two old, but he is the heir to the throne, so I join the ranks of you grandmas and grandpas. I feel welcomed by you and I'm looking forward to this season of life. That's for sure.

Now, a couple of much less important announcements. First, this is going to sound bad, but in two weeks, we actually have a night of worship right here in this room. I want you to know about that. We are going to worship our great God, not my great grandson. We're going to worship together two weeks from this past Friday. We'll all be back in here on a Friday night, just for prayer and worship. I want to make sure you know about that.

Also, a couple of Sundays ago, we just had a really special Sunday where we committed, as a church, that we weren't going to stop asking God to do those impossible things in our lives, to answer those impossible prayer requests.

We know some of those prayer answers are starting to come in, and we decided we wanted to begin hearing those stories, and so as God is answering those incredible prayers, we want to encourage you to email us. We have a little email address you could send those to. It's called My Story, and we want to just collect those and celebrate those together, so I wanted to make sure you knew about that.

Let's get our Bibles in hand now. Let's open them up to the gospel of Mark, chapter 3. As we're walking our way through the gospel of Mark, we now come to a place where the word about Jesus is spreading. Crowds are getting bigger and bigger and they're becoming almost uncontrollable, unruly in a sense.

We understand why. Crippled people are walking, lepers and sick people with diseases are being healed, and dead people are being resurrected. Something very special and unique in the time and life of Jesus is that he is showing women in his day the respect, dignity, and grace that God always intended, which was very rare in those days.

Possibly most startling, and perhaps most confusing, was that demon-possessed people are being set free because of Jesus. Demons are terrified and they're acknowledging Jesus as God, being forced to obey his every command. Many people are starting to believe that Jesus might actually be the Messiah who would come to save them.

It was an incredible moment in the life, history, and ministry of Jesus, as we're going to jump into here in just a minute, but here's what we also know. Not everybody was on the bandwagon. First, his family is beginning to think he's crazy. We're going to talk more about that next week, as to what you do when the people closest to you think you're nuts because you've surrendered your heart and life to Jesus Christ. What do you do when that happens? We're going to actually take a look at that and use Jesus as our example next week.

More cynical than Jesus' own family would be the Jewish religious leaders that were watching all of this happen in real time. They don't know what to do with Jesus. Their approval ratings are dropping in the polls in their day. I mean, they're on the verge of panic because people are leaving their following by droves and they're following Jesus.

So, the religious leaders decide that they're going to pay Jesus a little visit. At this time in Mark 3, Jesus is back in his hometown, so they're going to go to where he lives and they're going to find that there are crowds and crowds of people all camped out, like a scene right out of Woodstock, for those of you who are old enough to know what that is.

There are just people all over, jammed in the streets, the alleyways, the neighborhoods, and the fields, and they're just hoping to see Jesus, hoping to hear him, hoping he will touch their lives with the miraculous power of God.

Now, while these religious leaders are on their way to check it out for themselves, they're smart enough to know they can't deny that Jesus has done all these miracles. There are way too many eyewitnesses for that, and they get that. No, their only hope is to cast doubt on his character. They have to convince the people that Jesus isn't who they think he is.

They know that's their only chance. If they can get the crowds to not trust him, to doubt him, maybe they won't believe him and they'll walk away from Jesus and come back to follow their own religious priests and rabbis.

Now, there was only one problem. Right when they launch their smear campaign, which we're going to get to here in just a second, Jesus swings back. When he does, he puts their very souls in jeopardy, putting them in a far greater danger than any drop in their popularity would ever mean to their lives. This would apply to their eternity.

That's where we find ourselves now. We're going to step right into the scene. If your Bibles are ready, let's stand for the reading of God's Word. Mark, chapter 3... We're going to pick it up right where we left off last week. Last week, we ended up in verse 21. Today, we'll pick it up in verse 22.

"And the scribes [religious leaders] who came down from Jerusalem were saying, 'He is possessed by Beelzebul,' and 'by the prince of demons he casts out the demons.' And [Jesus] called them to him and said to them in parables, 'How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin'..." Some of your Bibles say *unforgivable* sin. **"...for they were saying, 'He has an unclean spirit.'"**

Father in heaven, as we stand before your Word right now, we ask, in the name of Jesus and in the power of your Spirit, that you would teach us, today. Help us, God, not only to just know what it says, but help us to understand what it says. God, where there's encouragement, I pray you would bring much comfort to our hearts today. Where there's warning, God, may our fear appropriately increase today. God, we love you and we ask that you would anchor our lives and our souls to your truth and your promise. In Christ's name, amen.

This exchange with Jesus, you guys, is really a picture or kind of a microcosm of the unbelieving world we live in today. Think about it. For a lot of people around us who reject Jesus or refuse to consider him to be who he has claimed and proved to be, they have to somehow convince themselves that Jesus isn't really God in the flesh, that Jesus is not the Son of God.

It doesn't really matter how they get to that conclusion, what they have to do to convince themselves. A complete lack of sincere consideration for the evidence for Jesus doesn't matter to them as long as their self-deception gives them enough emotional courage to walk away from Jesus believing there are no consequences for their decision.

That's the world we live in. It doesn't matter what proof and evidence there is for Jesus, his claims, his identity, and his cross. It doesn't matter. As long as you can come up with a way to

kind of relieve yourself of any consequences of rejecting that, then you're good. That's what our world has perfected.

1. *Some people will even go to the point to claim that Jesus is evil.* Some people believe Jesus is a form of the Devil. They're so bent on rejecting Christ that they will actually resort to accusing him of being demon-possessed, and that's exactly what we see here in the passage. That's their strategy. That's their way of giving themselves permission to reject Jesus.

Verse 22: **"And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, 'He is possessed by Beelzebul,' and 'by the prince of demons he casts out the demons.'"** Beelzebul... Originally, this demon or god was called *Beelzebub*. He was a god from ancient Egypt that the people worshiped in the Old Testament. You'll see the name *Beelzebub* come up later in the New Testament. He was known as the Lord of the Flies. Archaeologists have actually unearthed golden images of flies in that region where this god, Beelzebub, was worshiped.

As time went on, the Jews changed this god's name to *Beelzebul*. That's the one we're reading right here in the New Testament. This came to mean the Lord of Dung. That's where the flies congregated. That's where the flies hung out, and that was this god. Some scholars say he became known as the god of filth.

This word, *Beelzebul*, was bitter. It was a bitter scorn. It was a type of vulgarity that was considered off-limits, really. Ultimately, they came to use this term, *Beelzebul*, because... That god, as well, faded away, but they kept this god in their vernacular as a synonym for Satan. So, what they were saying that day is that Jesus is doing these miracles because he is the Lord of Dung.

Satan himself is his friend. Worse, Satan himself, this Lord of Dung, lives in Jesus. Now, can you feel the demeaning nastiness of this accusation? I want you to soak this up right here, because this is what they're saying about Jesus. They're basically saying Jesus is the Lord of Dung. Today, I tried to think of what could be that insulting today. I thought, well, maybe if you call Jesus a Wazoo fan or a Cougars fan. That might be somewhere... That's way up there. I couldn't really think of anything worse than that, so that's where I stopped in my thinking.

Silliness aside, we see here that their pride would not allow them to believe. They knew if the people believed in Jesus, then their influence over the people would end, and since they couldn't deny the miracles or the exorcisms Jesus was doing, they would just convince themselves that he was full of it. That's what they're saying here.

Just so you know, again, people still do this today. Their pride won't allow them to bow the knee to Jesus as Lord and Savior, and so they resort to calling him much less than he is, diminishing his true identity. What people will do to allow themselves to reject Jesus, or at least ignore him, is say, "Oh, well, he was a great philosopher," or, "He was a great social justice champion." They'll reduce Jesus to something much less than who he is.

If that doesn't work for their conscience, then they will resort to demeaning him, and they will call him a liar and even a lunatic. God does not respond, historically, very well to being demeaned and diminished. I want you to see for yourself in the Old Testament an example of how God responds when a person decides they're going to diminish and demean God in this way.

Turn to Isaiah, chapter 5. Would you do that with me? In Isaiah, chapter 5, God is speaking through the prophet to the people, who have decided that God isn't for real. They're taking it upon themselves to determine whether or not God is good or evil. You pick it up in Isaiah, chapter 5, verse 20.

"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight!" Now skip down to verse 24.

"Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble, and as dry grass sinks down in the flame, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom go up like dust; for they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts, and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel." Who is Jesus? The Living Word.

"Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against his people, and he stretched out his hand against them and struck them, and the mountains quaked; and their corpses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still." That's a serious response from God to those who will call him evil and then say evil things in the world are actually good.

2. There is no logic in believing Jesus and Satan are on friendly terms. There's absolutely no logic to that. It makes no sense, intellectually or logically, to think Jesus gets his power from demonic forces. We know Jesus is fully aware of the motives of these religious leaders who have come to his hometown, so in verse 23, he asks them the question, and I think it has kind of a tone of rhetorical irritation, so to speak.

In verse 23, he calls them to himself and he says, "How can Satan cast out Satan? You want the people to believe Satan is allowing me to destroy him?" He's looking at them, saying, "That's nonsense and you know it." You have to check your brains at the door to accuse Jesus of being empowered by Satan to drive out Satan.

So, Jesus uses parables to confront them. He gives three very, I think, provocative examples that clearly debunk their faulty logic. Look at verse 24 for the first example. He's talking about kingdoms here and he says a nation, a kingdom, or a country that fights against itself, that just continually has civil war within itself, will collapse, and the result will be a weak, broken, and ruined nation with ruined people.

The second parable or example is in verse 25, where he uses a house, a home, or a family. He says, "Hey, in a family where there is unending strife, fighting, and no forgiveness, eventually that family breaks apart and hatred and bitterness takes root in that family."

Now look at verse 26. He gives another example with another little parable and he uses Satan himself. He comes back to Satan and he says, "He can't remain either, if Satan is opposed to himself." From a purely logical sense, Jesus is saying, "Satan isn't that stupid. He's not going to possess me so I could destroy him. You're asking these people to believe something that's nonsense. So, Jesus uses a fourth parable. He's going to explain that his power over demonic forces has eternal implications for every human being, which is our third point.

3. *Jesus' power over Satan is a picture of his ultimate mission of redemption.* Every time Jesus delivered someone from demonic possession, it was a picture of what he came to do for every person who would believe. Now look at verse 27. **"But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house."**

Now, if I'm standing there in the crowd that day and Jesus has just confronted them with three parables that make perfect sense and then he launches into this, "No one breaks into a guy's house and steals his stuff unless he ties him up..." At this point in Jesus' confrontation and explanation, I'm starting to scratch my head, thinking, "That felt like a left turn, Jesus. You were just talking about you, and then accusing you, and now you're talking about breaking into a house. What in the world?"

Let's see if we can try to make sense of it. We have the advantage, now, of being on this side of the cross and resurrection. We have a lot of resources to really understand. We have, really, no excuse. The strong man in verse 27 is the master of the house. He's the man of the house. Jesus is saying, "If you're going to rob that guy's house, you had better tie him up first. If you're going to break in and take his stuff, you had better make sure you take care of him, or he's going to take care of you."

Right away, I think the people got the illustration. They got the parable, but the question is, what does that mean in relationship to what these guys came down to accuse him of? What's the proper interpretation? What's the application of this parable in real time? Well, there are four elements, four parts, to this parable in verse 27.

The first part is the strong man. The strong man in the parable represents Satan. He's the object of their accusation. The strong man Jesus is referring to in the parable is Satan himself. Then the question is, well, what's the house in the parable? Well, this would be the world, our world. John 12 refers to Satan as the master or the ruler of this world.

The next part in the question is, what are Satan's goods to be plundered? What is supposed to be taken from Satan? Ephesians 2, verses 1 and 2, tell us the answer to that. Satan is the prince of the power of the air, but he's also the spirit that's at work in those who are disobedient. The plunder in the house are all those who are under Satan's control, all those whom Satan has deceived into living their lives as though God doesn't exist. The plunder in the parable here is everyone who believes either God isn't real, Jesus isn't real, or if he is, it doesn't really matter.

The fourth part of the parable is, who is the one who is going to go into Satan's house and take those who are under his control? The answer to that is Jesus. He's the one who is going to go into Satan's house, rob him, and take away from him what he thinks belongs to him but really belongs to God. Jesus is saying, "Hey, you guys are accusing me of being possessed by Satan, but the truth is, I'm the only one who can go in here and tie or bind him up! He's the strong man of this world!" First John 3:8 says Jesus came "**...to destroy the works of the devil.**"

One of the first times Jesus ever preached in his public ministry... He was baptized, he went through his temptations, and then one of the first times he was in a synagogue, he asked for the Isaiah scroll and he opened it up to chapter 61. He read those verses in Isaiah, those messianic verses that talked about the fact that the Messiah would come to set the captives free, to give sight to the blind, to heal the brokenhearted, and to give freedom to those who were in prison.

Then, Jesus dropped the messianic bomb right there in that service and he said to them, after he rolled the scroll back up, "Today, this prophecy is being fulfilled before your eyes." Now, this was incredibly shocking, because here's what the Jewish people thought Isaiah 61 and all the messianic prophecies were all about in their Bible.

They thought all those freedom prophecies were meant to be applied to their political and national captivity under the oppressive rule of Rome, so they expected that when the Messiah came, he would rebel, revolt, raise up an army, march in, and deliver the Jewish people from the control, the captivity of Rome.

That is never what those prophecies were meant to mean. They were meant to be applied spiritually to their hearts that were held captive and trapped by Satan's lies, temptations, and deception, to be applied to their spiritual eyes. Jesus came to open the eyes of the blind so they would be able to see, by faith, who God is, who Christ is, and their need for salvation and forgiveness. That is what Jesus came to do. He came so we could have our true identity, our true security and dignity back that was broken by sin.

You see, every one of us was made by God. Every one of us was created for God to be in close fellowship and relationship with God, and unless somebody comes to disarm the strong man, we can never return to our rightful owner, because there is no way of escape. You see, when we reject Jesus as our true Savior, the only option we have left is to resort to turning to false saviors. If we remove Jesus from the picture, all humanity has is to find and create their own false saviors that only promise temporary escape.

So, really good things in the world, like being successful, wealthy, or healthy, things like fitness, career, sex, entertainment, recreation, marriage, happiness, or pleasure in every form end up becoming our little saviors. They become our gods, and 2 Peter 2:19 is very clear when Peter writes, "They promise us freedom, but they are slaves of corruption."

We will worship these little saviors in our world even in chains, if we have to. We will worship these things in the chains of addictions, adultery, and fornication. We will worship these things even if it means we have to lie, gossip, and slander to keep these little gods alive. We will

worship and become hateful and vengeful. We will worship in the chains of self-harm and every kind of selfishness and materialism imaginable, and we need someone stronger to set us free from all of the Devil's traps that hold us in his slavery.

This is the good news of the gospel. This is the message of Christianity. Galatians 5:1 says, "**For freedom Christ has set us free...**" Freedom from all the deceptive lies of a world controlled by a deceptive Devil, Satan himself. The cross of Jesus Christ was God himself coming down to you and me in the midst of our captivity.

His purpose in coming was to rescue us, to bring us out of Satan's rule, dominion, and chains, and to bring the kingdom rule of God to the earth. Not to our planet, but to our hearts, where he will reign and where he reigns as our loving, forgiving, merciful Lord and Savior. That's what Jesus came to do, to rescue us out of Satan's domain and kingdom and to bring us to God with him as our King. He has come to heal and restore what sin has destroyed: mainly, our hearts.

You see, when we make anything less than Jesus our savior, then our hearts will eventually be overthrown by things like fear, anger, or sadness. Our hearts will be overwhelmed with things like lust, emptiness, or regrets and shame. You see, this is what our pagan culture has done so well. They've pulled the wool over the world's eyes, the unbelieving world who rejects God and his Son, Jesus Christ, as their only Savior.

They've gutted reality by convincing the world that, "This is all there is, so don't worry about whatever comes next. Just get what you can and get as much of it as fast as you can, because this is it." That's the world's message, and millions of people have bought the lie. The world is so full of pride, it will not admit how empty we all still are. The world cannot admit, because of its pride, how superficial everything is.

So, Jesus, by his substitutionary death and his resurrection, has entered the Devil's house and tied him up. The Devil can't threaten Jesus with death; he has already risen from the dead. The Devil can't accuse Jesus of being wicked, evil, or sinful, because Jesus was sinless, and so he comes to die in our place so our sin will be forgiven. He comes to rise from the dead, conquering death, so our death will no longer be a sting, but it will be the doorway into eternity with him for all who repent and believe. We go free forever.

Romans 6:22 says, "**...you have been set free from sin...**" Romans 8:1-2 says, "**There is therefore now no [more] condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the [rule] of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the [rule] of sin and death.**" That is Jesus, who has come.

Yet Jesus doesn't stop his answer here. Now comes that spiritually head-scratching statement of Christ that has caused, for centuries, people to wonder. I don't think we have to wonder anymore. To accuse Jesus of being demon-possessed is to seal your condemnation forever. It's to condemn yourself to eternal destruction in hell with Satan, who is destined there forever.

Look at verse 28. **"Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter..."** Jesus wants to make sure, "Hey, every sin is forgivable. There's no sin too big for the grace of God and the blood of Jesus." Wouldn't we believe that Jesus hanging on a tree, nailed to a cross, asks his Father to forgive those who just nailed him to that tree? Forgiveness is available. There's no sin too great for God's grace except when you get to verse 29.

"...but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"—for they were saying, 'He has an unclean spirit.'" You see, to say that Satan possesses Jesus is to say God's Holy Spirit is the Lord of Dung. It's to say God's Holy Spirit is unclean and unholy. Jesus is saying this has just become more than a religious debate. This is more than a philosophical debate.

Jesus looks at them and says, "You're trying to give credit to Satan for only what a loving, merciful, and all-powerful God can do." If you want to represent the Spirit of God like that, I think Jesus is saying here that you just stepped outside the coverage of God's love and grace. You have just rejected the only way to freedom and forgiveness, because it is the Holy Spirit's power that opens spiritual eyes, that sets the captives free. It's only the Holy Spirit that was in Jesus that is able to do what only he can do.

Now, this kind of stuff didn't end at this moment. It went on later into the New Testament. I want to show you another warning in Hebrews, chapter 10. Would you turn there? The New Testament writers, a little later after Jesus' death and resurrection, had to keep dealing with this.

Look at verse 26. **"For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries [of God, or of Christ]."** Now scoot down to verse 29.

"How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant [that he shed on the cross] by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge his people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

You see, if a person denies that Jesus is God's Son, filled and empowered with God's Spirit, then how and where do they expect to find forgiveness? Who could ever set them free? There's no hope for conviction of their sin. There's no hope for ever knowing the truth, and there is no one who can set them free from Satan's rule over their heart of unbelief. In John, chapter 16, Jesus said, **"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth..."**

I know many of you in this room have put all of your faith and trust in Jesus Christ. You look back and you know he either rescued you out of a life of unbelief or from a life of unbelief if you came to Christ really early and young. Either way, you know, by the Spirit of God sovereignly and beautifully working in you, you came to a knowledge that you are a sinner and you can't

stand before a holy God with sin unforgiven and unremoved. So, you turn to the only one who can free you from it, Jesus Christ.

Others of you in this room haven't done that yet. I pray that by your mere presence here today, you have not determined in your mind that Jesus is just some other form of evil, some other form of the Devil, that he's what's wrong with all the world, and he's wicked. I pray that isn't you by your sheer presence here today. Today is your opportunity to say, "Okay, I surrender."

This is your opportunity to say, "God, I'm sorry for living my life up to this point as though you don't matter and Jesus' death on the cross doesn't matter." This is your day, today, to actually say, "God, I admit I'm a sinner. I admit there are all these other little gods in my life. I wasn't calling them that. I didn't realize that's what they had become, but that's what I'm doing. I lay all these little gods in my life down at your feet and I give my heart to you."

You can actually do that today and walk out of here forgiven if you ask Jesus to forgive you and be your Lord, your God, and your Savior, whom you will serve the rest of your life.

I'm going to ask us all to bow our heads and just sit still, just for two more minutes. Those of you who are already believers, you love Jesus, you follow him, and he's the center of your life. You're not perfect. I'm not perfect. That's not the issue. The issue is we know Jesus is our Savior and we love him. This may be a good time for you to just remember your salvation and give God great thanks for opening your eyes.

For others of you in this room, we're just going to have a moment of silence. This is your chance. If this is where you sense your heart is right now, this is your chance to say, "God, I give up. I admit I'm a sinner and I need your forgiveness. I ask Jesus to forgive me and to be my Lord and Savior." If that's the desire of your heart, in your own words, just you and him, right now...

Father, you tell us the angels in heaven rejoice over one sinner who repents, and I just pray that right now, many angels are rejoicing. I pray, God, for those who've just prayed to you in their own simple way, that you will comfort them and confirm in their hearts that you have heard their prayer, that you will give them faith to believe that any who would come to you by repenting and believing will be saved.

Help them, God, even today, to begin to sense that you are changing them, beginning with their hearts. Lord, all glory, honor, power, and praise go to you. In the name of your Son, Jesus, we pray, amen.

If you did just pray that prayer and surrender your heart to Christ, we want to give you something to leave with today. We want to give you your own Bible. We have a brand-new Bible up here. We want to give you what we call just a little starter kit to kind of help you begin to know what it means to have a relationship with God through faith in his Son, Jesus.

Just stop up here, look at some of these people, and just say, "Hey, today I believe." That's all you have to say, and they'll give you that and encourage you as you go home today as a new creature in Christ. I hope you'll do that.

God bless you. Enjoy the sunshine today. It's going to be raining tomorrow. Not really, but it probably will. If it does, you heard me say it first. Enjoy your day. We'll look forward to being together next Sunday. God bless you.