

The Story of Jesus

Part 7: What is the Unforgivable Sin?

Mark 3:20-35 - [watch online](#)

Summary:

The idea of an “unforgivable sin” has caused a lot of anxiety and worry for centuries. But what is it? And what does it have to do with the Story of Jesus?

Main Points:

[01:08] Our identity is the driving force of our lives

[01:50] If we can understand who we are we can understand our place in the world

[03:36] Jesus’ big claims of his true identity created some truly big reactions

[06:43] The identities we create for ourselves can blind us to the realities around us

[10:01] Jesus claimed to be the beginning of God’s great rescue invasion to save humanity

[13:32] If we don't accept Jesus’ real identity we can never find our true identity

[15:36] In the new family of Jesus our primary identity is Jesus

[17:22] The question of Jesus’ identity is a question we must all personally answer

[19:03] We are all invited to base our core identity on the most loving, joyful, and powerful person to ever live... Jesus

[22:52] We find the life Jesus offers now when we choose to accept the identity he offers now

Invitation:

Answer the question of Jesus’ identity for yourself.

Identify any identities you have placed above your identity as a member of Jesus’ family.

Do the will of God: Live out your love of and trust in Jesus through your love of others.

Discussion Questions:

1. If you were a type of restaurant what would you be and why?
2. How do you think the reactions to Jesus’ identity claims by his family (he’s crazy) and the religious leaders (he’s evil) compare to people's reactions to Jesus and his followers today? Why do you think they react this way?
3. Can you share an experience where your identity in Jesus influenced the way you responded to a person and/or situation?
4. Read Colossians 3 vv.1-4. What other identities or priorities do you think might be competing with your identity as a member of Jesus’ family? In what situations and ways can you make Jesus your primary identity this week?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

Transcript:

IN: **Mark 3:28-29**. Whoa... IS there a sin that God will never forgive?

Well, in its actual context Jesus’ statement is pretty clear and contains a lot more good news than bad...and it’s all wrapped up in who Jesus really is... so let’s talk about it together...

WE: We’ll get to the unforgivable sin.. But first we need some context... and to get there let me ask you a question...

Who are you? How do you describe your unique place/role in the world?

- Gender/Race/Orientation/Job/Relationships/Age/Nationality/Political leanings/Personality traits

Our identity is the driving force of our lives.

It influences the choices we make which determines the story of our lives...

- Am I someone who lies or someone who tells the truth
- Am I someone who contributes to the group or someone who takes
- Am I responsible for others or only myself... or completely irresponsible
- Do I let that person merge or gun it?
- That person just said something that is offensive to someone who identifies the way I do... do I take offense or not... how do I react?

All of it is based on how we see our unique place in the world... our identity.

If we can understand who we are we can understand our place in the world.

So, at the core what makes us us?

How do we find and cultivate our true identity... an overall lens through which we see and interact w/ the world?

No surprise... I think we find it in the Story of Jesus...

GOD: If we asked Jesus... who are you... what do you think your identity is... How would he answer?

Well on the surface he was an unmarried Jewish male craftsman in 1st century Israel

But as we've been going through his story, it's pretty obvious he saw himself as more than that...

- He said he was bringing the KoG
- Assumed the authority to forgive sin... an authority that was God's alone
- Called himself the Son of Man (a clear allusion to **Daniel 7:13-14**)
- Chose 12 main followers... a clear sign he thought he was bringing back true Israel.
- And when demons called him the son of God he didn't tell them they were wrong he told them to shut up b/c he didn't want people to know yet.

Big claims that created some big reactions... **Jesus' big claims of his true identity created some truly big reactions.**

- Even w/ his own family.

Mark 3:20-21 Jesus has been healing and casting out demons w/ just his words... and people are amazed...

But those who think they know him best, which usually means they think they know what's best for you...

- Have heard the buzz and the claims he's making... and they conclude that he's lost his grip on reality...

This story is one of the **proofs** that the story of Jesus' resurrection is true...

- If someone were trying to make up a story about an executed preacher they wouldn't include this **embarrassing** story about his family thinking he's crazy...
- What's more, after his death Jesus one of his brothers, James, becomes a main leader of the church in Jerusalem... a community dedicated to worshiping his brother whom he first thought was crazy...
- **What would change his mind?** Seeing his big brother die and rise from the dead.

But none of that has happened yet and his family is worried.

- Worried about his sanity, safety,
- And in that culture they are worried about what these claims will do to their family reputation

So they leave their village to go get him before he gets the attention of people who might do something about it...

But too late... important people have also heard about his claims and have a darker take on what's going on...

3:22 Teachers of religious law come from Jerusalem... the center of Jewish religion

They have a lot of influence and they have come looking for a fight... Why?

Jesus doesn't fit their picture of a good teacher (has no credentials)...

- He's been arguing that their way of doing religion is empty and about to be obsolete... Challenging their authority

They can't deny the amazing miracles and that demons have to obey what he says...

- But since he disagrees w/ them... The experts of God's law... he's obviously wrong...
- Which leads them to the only other conclusion... SATAN... seems like a pretty big leap...

The identities we create for ourselves can blind us to the realities around us.

So they try to change public opinion... try to label him... control the narrative...

They say he is possessed by Satan (the Accuser) himself... the chief demon... ruler of the kingdom of darkness and sin.

In the view of the BW and Jesus, there are two kingdoms at war in the more real spiritual world all around us...

- The Kingdom headed by Satan (Accuser)... Kingdom of darkness/evil/hate/sin/filth/death
- And the KoG. Love/light/peace/joy

Leaders: "You all might think he's doing good but he's tricking you... he's actually an agent of evil."

The connotation in the Greek is that they are talking ABOUT Jesus instead of talking TO Jesus... always the easy, cowardly move that most of us prefer... I know I do.

Going around talking w/ the people, trying to change their minds...

And Jesus has had enough... forces the whispers out into the light...

3:23-26 Jesus: "I'm possessed by Satan? That's one of dumbest things I've heard"

"Makes no sense... I'm releasing people from Satan's grip. He is losing ground to God's kingdom... Why would he do that to himself..."

AND... even if you're right... Satan's kingdom is still collapsing which means I'm still right and still bringing in the KoG...

Jesus was very clear on his identity and mission.

3:27 Jesus reveals what is actually going on w/ his miracles... not just healing people...

He is freeing people... and he is in the process of freeing all of humanity from the grip of the kingdom of darkness.

He has tied up the strong man, Satan, b/c he is stronger and now he is plundering his house... taking away what was once his...

Humanity has been captive in the kingdom of darkness and now the true king is here to free the captives by invading the enemy's territory and the fake king is utterly powerless to do anything to stop him...

- Every exorcism is another victorious battle in this rescue invasion.

Jesus claimed to be the beginning of God's great rescue invasion to save humanity...

Jesus' ministry is the decisive turning point in the battle between good and evil for control of the world and humanity.

He is fulfilling God's promise from the very beginning of this struggle... **Gen 3:15**

"I'm not working for Satan... I'm kicking his ass."

And it's in this context Jesus talks about what's come to be known as "the unforgivable sin"

And it all has to do w/ what we say about Jesus' identity...

3:28-29 "I tell you the truth"... other trans- Truly I tell/say to you... We see it a lot and kind of skip over it...

It's actually an assumption of authority... he speaks in his own name... doesn't rely on the authority of any one else... "Rabbi so and so says, or Gen 28:45 says..."

Jesus says "I'm saying this and it's true"... No other teacher at the time would have dared talk like this...

So what is he saying... What is this 'blaspheming of the HS' that is a sin that won't be forgiven and has eternal consequences?

3:30 Listen, "the unforgivable sin" isn't a particular sin God hates over others...

It's doing exactly what these religious leaders are doing... refusing to see the work of God and calling it evil instead of good.

- Attributing the power and work of God's own personal presence (HS) to the work of Satan
- Once they decided Jesus was evil and of Satan there was no chance they would come to him for forgiveness... their minds were already made up.

NT Wright likens it to a conspiracy theory... once you believe in a certain theory, all evidence you see will point to that theory being true so you can confirm your belief.

- You'll be blind to the truth no matter what the evidence actually shows
- If you firmly believe that the **doctor** trying to treat you is actually deep down trying to kill you you will never let him operate on you.

When your heart is this stubborn... You'll see God working and refuse to see it as good and only see it as evil

- Denying the work and power and identity of Jesus and the HS.

Jesus is saying, this isn't about my miracles... this is about who I actually am...

"Do you believe me or not... if you stubbornly refuse to accept my true identity you won't be able to find your place in my kingdom."

If we don't accept Jesus' real identity we can never find our true identity.

And as all of this is happening, Jesus' family is still traveling to come get him and bring their crazy brother home...

And they finally arrive...

V. 31-35 In our culture this scene seems a little rude, right?

- Like just go out and talk to them... they came all this way
- Don't need to call them out in front of everyone

It's even worse than that... In that time and culture this is **shockingly offensive.**

- For the ancient Jew the family was the basic fabric of what it meant to be the people of God...
- It was their main identity through which they saw the rest of the world
- Family was right up there w/ observing the Sabbath and keeping the food laws...
- If you were loyal to family you were being loyal to your ancestral heritage and therefore to the God of your people.

To disrespect those ties was to undermine a major pillar of Jewish society... it would be doing the **unthinkable**

And through Jesus, God ***is*** doing the unthinkable... he is creating a new people... a new family by breaking all the old ties from which we create our own identities

And this new family and identity takes precedence over any other identity... including our family.

And this new family shares one overarching identity... doing the will of God.

- Believing and repenting b/c the KoG is here
- Being a disciple of Jesus.

All of it based on who Jesus is and what he is doing and has done.

In the new family of Jesus our primary identity is Jesus.

Everyone is invited to join this new family... notice the inclusive language of brothers and sisters.

YOU: So in this story we see three reactions to what Jesus says about himself...

- Family thought he was crazy.
- Religious leaders thought he was an evil liar.
- Followers, his true family, trusted what he said about himself and based their identities on him.

CS Lewis' famous idea that Jesus is either Liar, Lunatic, or Lord.

- If you're familiar w/ that idea it's often been used as a tactic for Xians to debate w/ people who don't believe... as a kind of gotcha.

But Jesus didn't come so we could have ammunition to argue w/ each other... It's a question for all of us... whether this is the first time we've heard it or the 100th...

The question of Jesus' identity is a question we must all personally answer.

How do YOU actually answer the question... who was Jesus? Not what do you think the right answer is...

What does the identity you've created show about your answer to the question of Jesus' identity?

- Does your view of the world and how you interact w/ others actually say you think he was lying, crazy, or truly God on earth?

The proof is what do you honestly use to create your identity?

- Family/Income/Race/Gender/Education/Job/Role/Country/Religion (rules we follow to make us feel good about ourselves)

We might say he is God on earth but our actions/choices/reactions often show that deep down we don't think he was telling the truth.

If Jesus is who said he is, then we need to be who he said we would be... People whose lives are focused on doing the will of God... by bringing the love, joy, acceptance, peace of the KoG to the world around us.

In the family of Jesus our primary identity is Jesus... And when we choose that core/primary identity everything else falls into its proper place...

People become more important than political positions

Love becomes more important than rules
Peace and joy conquer fear and anger.

We are all invited to base our core identity on the most loving, joyful, and powerful person to ever live... Jesus

So what do we do?

1st: **answer the question of Jesus' identity for yourself**... take the time to explore it for yourself

- Read the rest of Mark...
- A couple of books that could help... Mere Xianity, Mark Clark's Problem of Jesus.
- If you end up believing him... tell him

If you believe Jesus was telling the truth about who he is...

2nd: **Identify any identities you have placed above your identity as a member of Jesus' family.**

- Most of them are not bad... but if you want to truly follow Jesus they CANNOT be your primary identity.
- Make a list of who you are... look at your recent arguments/posts/things that have fired you up... have those come from other identities taking priority over Jesus?

3rd: Practice being a member of his family... Live out your primary identity in Jesus **Do the will of God... Live out your love of and trust in Jesus through your love of others**

WE: So... who are you? What makes you, you? What identity is the driving force in your life?

When we die our jobs, education, nationality, political leanings, basketball teams won't matter... won't last.

What will last is our identity in Jesus himself.

Every other identity will fall away...

The identity Jesus offers rises above everything else... when the world doesn't make sense and we can't find our place in it... Jesus offers to show us exactly who we are in him.

We find the life Jesus offers now when we choose to accept the identity he offers now.

Next week Jesus talks about the different responses to who he is... read ahead... Parable of Farmer Scattering Seed.