

**June 10, 2018 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
**Rev. Jen Nagel, University Lutheran Church of Hope**

**2 Corinthians 4:13—5:1, Psalm 138**  
**Mark 3:20-35**

With sections borrowed from my own sermon preached at Salem English Lutheran Church-Minneapolis on 6-7-15.  
Bp. Michael Curry quote from Reclaiming Jesus on 5-24-18. Ideas from David Lose.net for this date as well as Working Preacher (Skinner, Lewis). Background from Binding the Strong Man by Ched Myers.

**Grace, peace to you, Beloved of Christ Jesus. Amen.**

**He's crazy.** That's what they are saying about Jesus this morning. Crazy.

"He has gone out of his mind," Mark reports in the gospel.

Can you see them shaking their heads,  
whispering behind their cupped hands,  
clucking under their breath,  
a little uncomfortable,  
a little wanting to protect him,  
a little nervous—all at once?

Can you picture them?

Because he's crazy—or at least that's what they think, that's what they say: Crazy.

**The crowds are getting twitchy.**

His family is afraid for him, and maybe a little afraid of him.

The religious leaders, the scribes? Oh, the scribes...they are threatened:

If they attribute this power to God, then what does that say about them?

So they make up all sorts of myths, it's the demons, don't you know.

The scribes, they're against him, and it's only the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Mark! They say he's crazy.

**Now, I use that word Crazy carefully, and also intentionally, very intentionally.**

Many of us struggle with our own mental health, with mental illness, and some in our families struggle, too.

Though we've learned so much since Jesus' time, the stigma still today is real, painful, isolating.

And maybe all this gives us a little insight into this chapter from Mark.

The way people expect others to act "normal", "typical" —because normal is how *they* act.

They called Jesus a radical, possessed...crazy.

**It really is only the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter**—all Jesus has done is announce that the reign of God is coming.

And he called a few disciples, cast out some demons, and healed a bunch of people.

Some of this he did on the Sabbath, that's true.

That was last week's gospel reading...that choice:

It turns out he opts for liberation, life, healing,

rather than following rules for the sake of status quo rules,

rules bolstering the religious institutions which bolster the political system, Rome's system.

Rather than following the institution's life-squelching rules,

he digs deeper: into our very own liberation tradition——remember the bondage of Pharaoh?

What would you do if faced with a choice like that?

Jesus opts for liberation and for that they called him crazy! Out of his mind. Possessed by demons.

### **I wonder if Jesus was most truly possessed by the Holy Spirit.**

Possessed by the injustice he witnesses around him.

Possessed by the people's need for another way, a new way...liberation in a painfully oppressive time.

**At the start of today's reading when the crowds are pressing in**, it's Jesus' family that comes to help.

By the end of the reading, Jesus is shrugging them off, asking, "Who are my mother and my brothers?"

And then answering his own question he gestures to those sitting nearby,

Here they are... "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and my sister and my mother."

In today's gospel, Jesus is trying to reframe how we understand family.

I don't believe he's doing this to dis-family, but rather because he is possessed by liberation.

The scribes, even his family, it seems, they can't imagine the kind of liberation Jesus expects.

He's out of his mind, a little crazy, for the sake of freeing us from all that binds us,

all that draws the boxes too narrowly,

all that stands in the way of God's restoration.

### **This week with a number you I attended the PEASE Academy Graduation held in our sanctuary.**

As Pomp and Circumstance played, the 11 graduates of PEASE Academy processed up the aisle.

Remember: PEASE is the recovery high school that daily graces our education wing—it has for 29 years!

PEASE stands for Peers Enjoying A Sober Education.

So between those 11 graduating students, they have (as of Wednesday) 4,008 days of recovery,

4,008 days drug and alcohol free.

4,008 days of a new and liberated life.

A little different than most graduations, at the PEASE graduation, each student is introduced individually.

The staff describe them with sweet detail, like the young person who came in all "glares and stares" (that's a quote) and then after a few months, softened and grew and learned so much.

How they found all new friends, for their old friends at their old schools would only pull them back to using.  
How they'll head off next year to Augsburg University's Step Up program or other colleges or work.  
This sober road they follow, the groups, the 12 steps, it possesses their days, their hearts, their minds.  
And that's counter-cultural and it's not going to sit well with teen-age status quo, some will call them crazy.  
But they have opted for freedom, for liberation.

**When I was in DC a couple** weeks ago, along with hearing great sermons at the Festival of Homiletics,  
I joined more than 2,000 others in a candle light procession to the Whitehouse.  
Before heading out, folks like Jim Wallis from Sojourners and Walter Brueggemann and Episcopal Bishop  
Michael Curry spoke

Bishop Curry—that's Royal Wedding Bishop Curry—said:

"Love your neighbor...Love the neighbor you like and love the neighbor you don't like.

Love the neighbor you agree with and the neighbor you don't agree with.

Love your Democrat neighbor, your Republican neighbor.

Your black neighbor, and your white neighbor, your Anglo neighbor, your Latino, your LGBTQ neighbor.

Love your neighbor," he said. "That's why we're here."

**Oh, we can hear that: ho hum, love your neighbor.**

Or we can *hear that* like Jesus said it: Love your neighbor.

And it can turn the tables of our usual ways, even our progressive, thoughtful ways,

it can prod us to vulnerability and brave space,

It can make us act like the Jesus we profess, the Jesus we follow...it can make us act crazy.

**They called Jesus crazy.**

They should call us all a little crazy.

If they don't, maybe we're not doing it right.

In baptism we're drowning our old lives and being raised again with Christ. Crazy.

We're standing up to the demons of our time:

the fear that divides us from everyone, our neighbors, and even our own souls,

the temptation to forget the beauty of God's hand at work,

the corruption of creation. Crazy.

We're committing to worship together, Sunday after Sunday,

being sent out to change the world, day after day—because that's what Jesus would have us do. Crazy.

We're living our lives trying to express our love for God, because God first loves us. **Crazy? Probably!**

And that's the kind of crazy love our Savior has for us and for our world. Thanks be to God. Amen.