



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Week 11: Unforgiving Jesus???

## 1. Jesus Believed In A Real, Literal, Living But Ultimately Defeated Satan

- Read Mark 3:22-27

Jesus spoke of Satan as a literal figure and not as something that the culture had wrongly believed to be true. He also taught that Satan's time was running out as he was on the losing team. As Christians we need to be aware of Satan as a reality but we should also be brave because we are with Christ on the winning team.

- ❖ Q: Does Jesus give even the slightest suggestion that the devil is not a literal being?
- ❖ Q: Is the idea that there is a literal, evil being called the devil/Satan a little difficult for you to believe? If so, why?
- ❖ Q: Do all cultures in South Africa struggle to believe in evil forces/beings, or is this more of a western struggle? Explain your answer. (Give time for those of different cultures to explain their backgrounds and experiences).

## 2. Jesus Comforts The Afflicted

- Read Mark 3:28-30

The Jews were incredibly strict on the issue of blasphemy. Blasphemy is far more than the inappropriate use of Jesus' name. It is anything that makes God into something that he is not. Jesus got up and challenged their rules by saying that "God's grace was bigger than the failings of the people, and that his extensive grace even covers blasphemy".

- ❖ Q: In what ways do we as Christians blaspheme (make God into something he is not)? [E.g. we make him appear small when he is huge, we make him seem cruel when he is kind, we make him out to be stingy when he is generous, we make him out to be judgemental when he is gracious etc.]
- ❖ Q: In what specific way have you been guilty of blasphemy this year, even if it has been in your thought life and not seen by the world?
- ❖ Q: Is there grace for the times when we have blasphemed God in this way and made him out to be something he is not? What is your response to this grace?

## 3. Jesus Afflicts The Comfortable

- Read Mark 3:29, Acts 10:38, Matthew 12:22-28, John 15:26, John 16:12-14, 1 Corinthians 12:3 & 1 John:1-3

To understand what the 'blasphemy against the Holy Spirit' means in this passage requires a little theological digging, where the context is key. At this point in the narrative, Jesus turned from the general crowd to specifically address the religious leaders. They had come from Jerusalem because they had heard that the people were starting to believe that Jesus was the awaited Messiah. Not only did they deny this as a possibility, but they even accused Jesus of having come from Satan. Their lack of faith in him was a result of their resistance to the work of the Holy Spirit in their own hearts. Their resistance to the Holy Spirit's work in calling them to Christ would be the same resistance that would stop them from receiving the forgiveness of sin that was to come through the death and resurrection of Jesus. In our context, 'blaspheming the Holy Spirit' means to resist the work of the Holy Spirit in calling us to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

- ❖ Q: Prior to this message what did you think 'blasphemy of the Holy Spirit' meant?
- ❖ Q: Why do you think understanding the context of this passage is so key to understanding what it means?
- ❖ Q: If you have crossed the line of faith, can you still 'blaspheme the Holy Spirit' in the way Jesus was talking about? Explain.

## 4. Our Response Is To Receive Or Reject The Work Of The Holy Spirit In Our Lives

Receiving the work of the Holy Spirit will mean different things for us, because God is working with us in different ways. For those of us who have crossed the line of faith, the Holy Spirit is calling us to believe, to repent and to obey in a variety in different areas of our lives.

- ❖ Q: In what way is the Holy Spirit calling you to respond? Repentance, belief, obedience? Be specific about how God is calling you to respond.