



Grain

“Protect your stillness.” –Evagrius

Field

²¹When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, “He has gone out of his mind.” ²²And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, “He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.” ... ²⁸“Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; ²⁹but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”— ³⁰for they had said, “He has an unclean spirit.” ³¹Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. ³²A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.” ³³And he replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” ³⁴And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.” Mark 3:21-22; 28-35

Thoughts

It's not the people without any personal or official authority in our lives who are most likely to challenge our sense of reality, although social media has had an intense impact on many. In general, those who know us most intimately or who have the strongest religious or political power in our contexts have the greatest influence over us. Jesus experienced significant religious leaders and his closest family members claiming he was Satanic and out of his mind. Those sorts of accusations would have taken me awhile to recover from. Jesus was immediately clear. The vitality of God could not be boxed in but rather demanded more spaciousness.

None of us is Jesus but we are in wonder of how he disputed individual and larger systemic lies while keeping his core of faith. He went far in diminishing the authority of his family in the story. “Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.” However, Jesus didn't divorce his family. Remember what John's Gospel reported about Jesus on cross: “Then Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing by, He said to his mother, ‘Woman, behold your son;’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold your mother!’” Family was expansive, but the vitality of God could not be limited by family, or other authorities.

The story becomes more disturbing when Jesus claimed there was a sin that could not be forgiven. Was Jesus just trying to wake people up to the seriousness of confusing God's realm with what was demonic? His resistance to forces that would try to box in the sacred and even confuse it with evil was strong.

How do we practice awareness of the sacred? It's not via our perfection. Our realization of Jesus' love often seeps in through what is missing in our lives, or an admission of limits we are placing on God or of issues still troubling us. Which societal problems are weighing on our hearts? By grace, God takes hold of us, so we are vulnerable with our questions and admissions in prayer and worship. May the vitality of God's love protect your core of faith and grant you spaciousness with your public voice. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy