
OUT OF OUR MINDS

“He’s out of His mind.”

- Do you want to follow someone about whom that statement is made? I mean, really?
- Do you want a leader for whom that description might fit?
 - “HE’S out of HIS mind.”

Yet, in today’s gospel, this is what is said about JESUS?

- So, while we don’t want to follow someone people say is “crazy”, we say we’re followers of JESUS.
 - What makes JESUS different from the others?

Maybe it has to do with how we define “crazy.”

- I’m not talking about what makes you crazy or what makes you want to go out of your mind.
 - I’m talking about what you think of as absolutely crazy.

Someone has suggested Four Levels of Crazy:

- 1) Talks to self.
- 2) Argues with self.
- 3) Interrupts self while arguing with self.
- 4) No longer speaks with self because of argument with self.

It’s interesting that just a few chapters into Mark’s story about JESUS, those around Him are saying that HE’S crazy.

- Saying people are crazy, or in this case, the parallel, “out of His mind,” is strong language.
- It’s a way of discrediting people, dismissing their views and actions, and trying to limit, if not destroy, their credibility and influence.
 - It’s the kind of thing you say either in jest to a good friend, as in “Don’t be crazy, we could never do that!” or,
 - to—and honestly, more frequently *about*—someone you really don’t like: “Don’t listen to him—the guy is just plain crazy.”

The second is precisely what people are saying about JESUS.

- And they’re not just saying here and there, once in a while, or under their breaths.
- No, they’re saying it out loud, in public, and even to HIS own family.
 - Not only that, but HIS family seems to be buying it.
 - They are moved to action because *“people were saying,”* as Mark notes, “HE is out of HIS mind.”

So, I’ll ask again: what does it take for you to decide someone is crazy?

- Is it that they hold very different beliefs from you?
- That they are at the other end of the political spectrum?
- That they act and behave in ways that are threatening or, at the very least, hard to understand?
- That they have a passion that isn’t just theirs but that they want, even insist, should be everyone’s?

In JESUS’s case, it seems to be that HE is healing anyone and everyone in need and casting out demons...and doing all this on the Sabbath.

- HE is, in other words, breaking all the rules to make sure everyone can experience GOD’s grace.
 - All of which sounds pretty good, doesn’t it?
 - So why are folks saying that HE’s lost HIS mind?

Well, think about it: In JESUS' acts of wild abandon and extreme inclusion, to the point of defying religious norms, HE is shaking up the people around HIM,

- particularly, but not exclusively the religious authorities on two fronts.

First, HE is defying norms about who's in and who's out.

- Folks possessed by a demon, those maimed or born with some physical limitation or defect, these kinds of people were often assumed to be cursed, to be unnatural, not normal, or to have sinned grievously (or be suffering from the sins of their parents).
 - Yet JESUS forgives and heals *all* who are in need.
 - Everyone. No exceptions.
- And, just in case folks weren't sure about this before, JESUS will soon push HIS point unbelievably and quite literally home when HE says any and all who do the will of GOD are HIS true brothers and sisters and mother,
 - radically redefining what constitutes a family in an age when family was everything.

Second, and more importantly, HE's putting the needs of the people HE encounters above the religious traditions that regulate their lives.

- Make no mistake: these religious traditions are important, useful, and valuable, but—as we saw last week—they had become an end unto themselves—keeping the laws about the Sabbath was more important than experiencing and enjoying the Sabbath.
 - And when we put following the rules ahead of meeting needs, we've actually, even if accidentally, misused the very rules GOD gave us to improve life.
 - This is why JESUS is called crazy—out of HIS mind.

And this is why those who follow HIM today are sometimes called crazy—out of our minds.

- Because, quite frankly, it sounds kind of crazy to invite everyone into our fellowship without background checks, metal detectors, or security.
- And it might sound crazy to put the integrity of families above border security or personal freedoms.
- And it's definitely crazy to declare each week forgiveness for all our sins and everyone else's.
- It's even more crazy to say that GOD loves everyone the same.
 - This just isn't how the quid pro quo world works.
 - And yet it's what JESUS does and calls those who follow HIM to do as well.

But I wonder if this allegation, “out of our minds” is something that we've tried hard to avoid as the course of Christianity has evolved.

- Rather than hold on to, even celebrate, the nonsensical or, as Paul says, “the foolishness of GOD,” as inherent to the Christian faith,
 - we have worked toward and have succeeded in making our beliefs more palatable—more normal for others.
 - Given the fact that in these days and times, the very definition of what it means to be a Christian is up for grabs, it might be time to face the truth of our own complicity in making Christianity more appealing to others by making it less crazy.

In what ways, either intentionally or unintentionally, have we watered down the challenges and difficulties of our beliefs?

- Replacing hardships with pleasantries, avoiding those things that make us uncomfortable or might make others uncomfortable.

I get it. We've witnessed the labeling of Christians who seem so extreme in their beliefs that the world says they are out of their minds because their actions are radically different from our faith and theology.

- We don't want to be connected with those who picket funerals because they disagree with the lifestyle of those who are being buried in the church.
- We don't want to be seen as aligned with Christians who will tell you who it is that GOD loves, or more loudly, who GOD doesn't love.
 - So, we keep quiet and live out our faith in relationship to those who we know believe like us and who won't call us crazy.

The last church I served hosted a checkpoint for the AIDS/Life Cycle riders.

- Every year, hundreds of bicyclists ride for a week down the central California coast to raise funds to fight HIV/AIDS.
 - On each different day, many of them wear costumes like tutus or clown suits.
- The first year the congregation did this, someone from the neighborhood came to the church and asked me, "Why do you let *those* people on your property? I thought you were a church."
 - I replied, "That's exactly why they are here. We extend to them the same welcome that GOD offers to all people."
 - Her response was, "Not my GOD."

There is an insidious aspect to what is happening to JESUS here.

- We're told that the teachers of the law accused HIM of being in league with Satan.
 - "HE's demonic. HE's satanic. And you folks don't want to listen to HIM, do you?"

You see, that's what we do even today when someone opposes us.

- We call them names. RINO's. Snowflakes. Woke.
 - "You don't want to be with them, do you?"
- We label them and then proclaim that we are the ones who can overcome them. Just stick with us.
 - Here the religious leaders are saying that JESUS serves Satan and they'll save you from HIM.

Yet following JESUS calls us to make the radical, upside down, truly unbelievable revelation of GOD in the person of JESUS CHRIST into a way of living,

- that makes us stand out from the way of the world and from the way others perceive the followers of JESUS.
- Because the actions of JESUS, back then and today, challenge the ways of the world and the extremes of the church to say that the desire to judge and fence in or out those around us by how they conform to our expectations is not the way of GOD.
 - In fact, when we hear, truly hear, the words of JESUS and watch, openly watch, HIS actions, what we discover over and over again that whenever a line is drawn between who's in and who's out, JESUS is on the other side,
 - identifying with them, caring for them, and loving them...just as HE loves us.

GOD needs us to live like we're crazy—out of our minds because the world needs us to live like we're out of our minds.

- Certainly, there's a price to pay.
 - JESUS did because those who were upset by HIS radical embrace and outlandish love conspired, threatened, and eventually trapped and crucified HIM.
- But none of this deterred HIM, and we cannot let it deter us.
 - JESUS died unjustly to demonstrate GOD's crazy love.
 - And on the third day, GOD raised JESUS from the dead.
- Which means that for JESUS and for any of us who are said to be out of our minds for the sake of the kingdom, the resurrection itself is the ultimate testimony that GOD's expansive and all-encompassing love simply cannot be stopped.

We follow a crazy and crucified SAVIOR, and those who follow JESUS are intrinsically different.

- What makes the church stand out, perhaps truly out of its mind, is that we tell the truth of our own sinfulness.
 - We are willing to admit it and our story gives us the words of JESUS HIMSELF that frees us to live differently, crazily, out of our minds.

So don't worry if you show GOD's radical, outlandish, unconditional, and inexplicable love and people say you're crazy.

- You're in good company.
 - We love the unlovable because, when we were unlovable, GOD in JESUS loved us.
 - We serve the ones the world says should not be loved because, in our worthlessness, GOD in JESUS served us.
 - We invite the outcast because, in our sinfulness, GOD in JESUS invited us.
 - What was GOD in JESUS thinking?
 - I can only come to one conclusion.
 - HE must have been out of HIS mind.