

“The Only Kind of Sinner that Receives No Mercy”

Mark 3:21-35; Matthew 12:30-37

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### **Opening Prayer**

The reality, Beloved, is that there is a heaven and there is a hell. The reality, that should keep us motivated, is that most in this world will not go to the former. The reality as well, that should keep us in check and keep us as Christians from being anything other than humble, is that none of us deserve heaven. The core of our faith is that any and all who call upon the name of Christ can and will be forgiven of their sins, and shall inherit eternal life. But for those who refuse His call, His free gift of mercy, that sinner is under the weight of his own sin. If you want to think about it another way, we only receive heaven by His grace and love and work within us, and we only go to hell if we reject and rebel and run from Him. When we talk about the unpardonable sinner, it is the man or woman who rejects that free gift. Beloved, the only kind of sinner who receives no mercy from our Lord, is the one who rejects Him. The unpardonable sin, Beloved, is rejecting Christ as Lord in all of His glory. Everything but that is forgivable.

This Lenten season we have been examining Jesus’s mercy towards us as found in the Gospel of Mark. In truth, you cannot read scripture without seeing the Lord’s justice, grace, power, forgiveness, love, and mercy at all times. Mercy is not receiving that which someone deserves. It is predicated, most often, on forgiveness. In our reading from Mark 3 and from Matthew 12, which both detail much of the same account, Jesus explains the vastness of God’s mercy even as the Pharisees are accusing Him of having a demon. “Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemes they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.” Mark adds clarification in verse thirty that Jesus says exactly this because the Pharisees were saying He had an unclean spirit. It is an interesting thing to read here. All sins, Beloved, are forgivable. All sins are forgivable, as we know, if one turns and follows Christ. Even blasphemies that are spoken against Jesus in ignorance, even great and horrendous sins like war crimes or murder, even these sins are forgivable by Jesus’s hand. That is incredible mercy on God’s part, to die for people such as this. Don’t overlook how that applies to us too. If Christ is your Savior, then you are forgiven of your sins, His blood is has washed you clean.

All of the things that we struggle with mightily, they can be forgiven and indeed are forgiven for the Christian. His mercy is wide and vast.

It might be helpful to break down the “unpardonable sin” a bit more. It is a common question that comes up, and there has been much fear regarding it. I have to admit, sometimes there are topics that I preach on where we can only but scratch the surface. While it may be true that if you cannot explain something succinctly that you cannot thusly explain it, it may also be true that to give the cliff notes on something large such as this topic is to not do it justice. There has been a ton written, but out of the various commentaries and tools I used for this week, one quote stood out as being very helpful in explaining the unpardonable sin succinctly.

I’m quoting from Ernest Thompson’s work The Gospel According to Mark and Its Meaning for Today here as I seek to give us good insight. Here is what he has to say on the matter of Mark 3:28-30: “In regard to the unpardonable sin, no explanation has any right to consideration unless it is drawn from the context. Plainly, Jesus is warning the Pharisees against a sin which they have almost committed, in that they have confused the workings of the Holy Spirit in Him with the workings of the Devil. If men, religious or otherwise, disparage or deride as evil efforts which are obviously for the good of men and which manifest the power of the Holy Spirit, if they vilify as agents of the Devil men who are in truth instruments of the Spirit, they are in danger of committing the unpardonable sin. It is unpardonable only because it is a sin for which men will never ask pardon... Probably we should understand ‘never’ not as absolutely, but as ‘for all practical purposes.’” The unpardonable sin is the one that is so deeply rooted, so blindingly all-consuming, that the individual never goes back to the Father. One of the best clarifications that the writer of that quote makes, is that if a person is contemplating if they have committed the unpardonable sin, if they are capable of going before the Lord in humility and asking for forgiveness, then they most certainly are not guilty of it. If you are sitting here with us this morning, and you call Jesus your Lord, then you have most certainly not committed this sin. You can be safe and secure in that truth, for even though all of us sin, we are forgiven by He who went to the cross for us if we but call His name. The unpardonable one would never go before Christ in humility.

Going back to the account, there is an encouraging truth couched in this talk about the unpardonable sin. While the vast majority of the Pharisees never did get it that Jesus was the Messiah, they aren't the only ones who were unbelieving at this point in Jesus's ministry. His own family is present for this as well, and they too don't believe... at least not yet. If you needed hope and encouragement this morning in continuing your prayer for your loved ones, Jesus's own family should provide that for you. In Mark three, as Jesus is talking about how a house divided against itself cannot stand (another rebuttal that shows He didn't have a demon by the way), Jesus's earthly house shows up to take Him home. In verse 21 it says "When His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, 'He has lost His senses.'" Later in the chapter it gives even more clarification about who was there to get Jesus. "Then His mother and His brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent word to Him and called Him." Jesus's own family, who had known Him from birth, who (especially Mary) would have been aware of just how special He was, who had seen Him commit no sin, think that Jesus has lost His mind. They don't believe Him to be the Messiah, and certainly not the Lord in human flesh. Yet, later they will understand and come to recognize Him as Lord.

To give you the family background here, Mary is the best known of Jesus's family, and she is His mother. Joseph, Jesus's adoptive earthly dad, was probably already dead by this point. The two brothers we know about, James and Jude, were obviously younger than Jesus. Of those four, three (because Joseph had passed) we know came to follow Jesus later. Mary is at the foot of the cross and sees her Son resurrected, and she believes as is apparent in Acts 1. James and Jude both write New Testament books, which we know as the letters of James and Jude, that talk about Christ's divinity. Clearly all of the family we know about who were there came to regard Jesus as Lord in time. They received salvation from their sins, even though they didn't believe at first. I bring this up Beloved, to share some hope with all of us this morning. There is not a person in the room who doesn't fear for family, friends, loved ones, acquaintances, etc. that they wouldn't stray from Christ. There isn't a one of us who doesn't hope that those we love will in time be like Jesus's family, and come to know Him.

It is a common theme here in our churches, for us to talk about this, but it is so important. So long as someone draws breath there is hope for their salvation. I'll say that again, so long as someone draws breath there is hope for their salvation. If

you need proof, you can look into the lives of those well-known saints in scripture. Peter is the head of the disciples, the very leader... yet he denies Jesus three times and abandons Him. Peter is redeemed and saved Beloved. The Apostle Paul is another, beginning his life persecuting the church horrifically, agreeing the murder and imprisonment of Christians. He breathed threats against the church, and most assuredly cursed the name of Jesus. Yet, in time, by the power of the Lord and then later through the encouragement of fellow believers, Paul became the greatest missionary ever. David was redeemed after falling into adultery, the whole Israelite nation was redeemed out of the exile, the list goes on and on of those who were forgiven for great sins. The thing they all have in common is that they repented and returned to the Lord. For you and I, when we ponder the unforgiveable sin, that is what we should return to. The only sinner who does not receive mercy is the one who rejects it from Christ's hand.

Beloved, as we get close to the end of the message for today, I want us to leave on a positive note being the glass half full kind of man that I am. I would turn your attention to the end of both of our readings. The end of our reading from Matthew is Christ's words on how words reveal character. "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit." Here is where this can and should be encouraging Beloved. If you find yourself struggling beneath the weight of sin and evil in this world, remember the wonderful things that the Lord has accomplished through you. It isn't that you are taking the credit by any means, but it is good to remember what the Lord has done with a willing and humble servant. Those are the fruits produced by those who are His. Have you served in the church? That is good fruit. Even better, have you read scripture and prayed and served the Lord within your family? That is good fruit! Have you found yourself praying and serving the Lord in ways that nobody knows about? That is extremely good fruit! Spreading the gospel to others, intentionally growing in your study of the Lord, an active prayer life, involvement in worship with other believers, these are all good fruits produced by those who the Lord lives within. While we don't take credit for the Lord's work in us, we should recognize that it is happening. It is evidence, Beloved, of the faith and thus also the salvation that we have. It is evidence of what we read and see in Christ's own words, that we are not under judgement, but have been freed from sin and death by His hands.

This brings us to the last point from scripture from this morning. At the end of Mark three, Jesus says this to those who were telling Him that His earthly family was calling for Him: “Who are My mother and My brothers?’ Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He said, ‘Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.’” The point being, Beloved, those who follow Christ are a part of the family. You may have wandered in here this morning feeling distressed, tired, beat-up, and alone. You may have heard the words about the unpardonable sin and the sinner who receives no mercy, and wondered if that was you. Beloved, hopefully you have been encouraged with regards to that, that if you call upon Jesus as Savior that you are not guilty of an unpardonable sin. You are free, in fact, from all sin. You who have repented and called upon Jesus, whether it was eighty years ago or eight minutes ago, are fully saved and are guilty in the eyes of God no longer. But it is even better than that. You are a part of His family, a part of our family, the church. We don’t say words like Beloved, brothers and sisters, or church family lightly. If you call upon Christ, then this is your family too. It extends beyond these walls to the millions, if not billions, of other Christ followers across the globe. Beyond background, ethnicity, upbringing, social status, and any other human metric, you have been made into a part of God’s family. Rest and take encouragement in that truth Beloved, Jesus has not only forgiven you of your sins and saved you out of eternal death, but He has also made you a part of His household. Brothers and sisters in Christ, praise the Lord, let us pray.

### **Closing Prayer**