

# When Jesus Withdraws

Mark 3:6-12

*Halifax: 24 February 2019, 10:30 AM*

## Introduction

Today in Mark's gospel, we come to chapter 3, verses 6-12; a passage where Jesus withdraws.

- He is actually driven off by corrupt leaders.
- It may seem strange that the mighty Son of God should withdraw, but it is actually quite common for Him—and it is something He continues to do today, as we shall see.

In our text we are shown how different sorts of people (or beings as the case may be) stand in relation to His withdrawal:

- You have here the corrupt leaders.
- You have Jesus' disciples.
- You have the multitudes.
- And you have the unclean spirits.

Our goal in looking at this will be to understand what happens when Jesus withdraws and to see how we ought to respond to Him when He does.

Please give attention now as I read to you from this passage... Mark 3:6-12.

- Remember that this is the Word of God, holy and infallible.
- Be sure that you receive it with reverence and love.

**Mark 3:6-12: Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him. <sup>7</sup> But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea <sup>8</sup> and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him. <sup>9</sup>**

**So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him. <sup>10</sup> For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. <sup>11</sup> And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, "You are the Son of God." <sup>12</sup> But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known.**

May the Lord add His blessing to the reading and the preaching of His word.

## **I. Let's begin by looking at the corrupt leaders. They cause Jesus to withdraw.**

A. You can see this in our text.

1. Verse 6 closes out the passage we looked at last week where the Pharisees and the Herodians began to plot about how they might destroy Jesus.
  - They were incensed because Jesus had not only healed a man on the Sabbath in violation of their traditions,
    - but what was worse: *He had not melted down when they confronted Him.*
  - They were usually quite good at intimidating those who did things that made them uncomfortable, and getting them to apologise all over themselves.
    - But Jesus did not cower or back down before them.
    - He did not play their game.

- But there was no wrong before God in healing a man on the Sabbath Day.
    - The Pharisees had begun as reformers who were standing against the tide of secularism, but they had calcified over the years, and instead of upholding the law of God, had come to uphold their traditions.
    - They had reduced religion to nothing more than rule-keeping and had forgotten about the more important matter of loving your neighbour.
  - When they opposed Jesus for healing this man, He exposed how they did not care about people—was it wrong to do good on the Sabbath? to give life?
    - Surely not, but there they were opposing this gracious work of God for this man—a work of mercy that God delights to do on the Sabbath.
  - These leaders were used to being feared and being able to shame anyone that opposed them.
    - They could not tolerate that Jesus was resisting them and making them look bad.
    - And that is why they came to the conclusion with the Herodians that Jesus needed to be destroyed.
2. And you can see in verse 7 what Jesus does.
- It says, “**But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea.**”
    - He stopped ministering at the synagogue and in the city because of them.
    - He withdrew to the shores of the Sea of Galilee—away from the city.
3. What a sad thing for the synagogue.
- This synagogue had the very Son of God in their pulpit, but now their leaders had driven Him away.
  - How many pulpits there are that have driven away those who preach the truth!
- B. It has often been the case that corrupt leaders have caused Jesus to withdraw.
1. We see it in His ministry upon the earth.
- We have several occasions in the gospels where He slips away or avoids a place because of the opposition of the leaders.
    - When He sends out His disciples to minister, He instructs them to do the same... to shake the dust off of their feet and move on the next city when they are rejected.
  - It is not His way to impose Himself upon them...when He was opposed, He simply withdrew.
    - He might easily have called fire down upon them or struck them with leprosy or caused the ground to open and swallow them alive, but He did not.
  - Now of course in saying this, I am not talking about how He breaks through the resistance of sinners He saves, putting them to death and raising them to life again by the power of His Spirit...
    - I am talking about His approach with churches.
    - He and His servants go to preach at the synagogues or in churches, but if the leaders do not want them, they simply move on.

2. This has been His normal pattern throughout history in sending out His disciples.
  - When His faithful servants are driven out of the church by corrupt leaders, Jesus does not remain with the corrupt leaders...
    - When His faithful servants are driven out, He takes it that He has been driven out and He simply departs and leaves them to their own ways.
    - What a terrible thing it is for those congregations that drive Him away. He goes to minister somewhere else.
  - In the book of Revelation, He tells the churches that have grown corrupt that He will withdraw from them if they do not repent.
    - He threatens to remove His lampstand—to take away the light of His gospel and to leave them to their own way...
  - We have seen this pattern again and again in recent history in our own churches.
    - Corrupt leaders rise up in the church and they begin to oppose Christ and those who are faithfully serving Him.
    - For example, this happened in the Presbyterian Church USA that I grew up in.
      - They had leaders who were opposing faithful ministers and eventually, the LORD took a people out of them and formed a new denomination called the Presbyterian Church in America.
      - Now, 45 years later, corrupt leaders are found the Presbyterian Church in America, and it could easily come about that Christ will withdraw from them.
  - It is a sad thing for those churches when they lose the gospel.
    - They are left to flounder in their own ways—God turns them over to ridiculous idolatry and more and more vile behaviour—something we will look at this afternoon when we study Romans.
      - This is the very reason there are so many religions in the world.
      - All of them have the origins in rejecting the truth.

TRANS> It is a sad thing for those churches from which Christ withdraws,  
 - but it is all under God's sovereign hand of providence and serves His purposes.

## **II. Now let's look at Christ's true disciples. They go with Him when He withdraws.**

- A. This is mentioned very quickly in our text, but it is significant.
  - It simply says, **“Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea.”**
    1. Where Jesus goes, His disciples go... this is a given.
      - A disciple is a student of Jesus—a student who is devoted to Him and who goes with Him wherever He goes.
      - There is an inseparable bond between them. They bear His reproach.
    2. It also works the other way.
      - Now that Jesus is in heaven, He promises that He will always be with us.
        - So when His true disciples are driven out, He goes with them.
        - He counts it that He was driven out whenever they are...

- Just as when Saul was persecuting the church, Jesus was in heaven, but He said, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”

B. But know that Jesus’ disciples are never hurt, but always helped by this.

- God uses it in their sanctification.
- 1. It can be very painful for them and they may shed many tears.
  - It may involve the separation of family and friends.
  - Jesus said that following Him will bring that kind of sorrow.
- 2. But He also said that we are blessed when we bear reproach and are rejected for His sake.
  - It has a way of purging us from our attachment to the world.
    - It deepens our love for Christ and our commitment to Him when He calls us to lose our status, our reputation, our friends, our loved ones for His sake.
    - He gives a fresh sense of His love for us, and He gives us a clearer view of His glory, and a freshness in our walk with Him.
  - It also deepens our love and commitment to our fellow disciples as we bear rejection with them for Jesus’ sake.
    - It deepens our bond with each other and our unity as we support and encourage one another in the LORD.
  - It also strengthens our hope—
    - Jesus promises us that we will have great reward in heaven when we make such sacrifices for His sake.
- 3. The whole affair clarifies who truly belongs to the Lord.
  - a. It has a way of purifying the church—
    - Those who stand for popular morality drive out those who follow Christ.
    - And those who reject Christ for idols drive out those who receive Him.
    - Instead of having one mixed body, you have one clearly apostate church that may cease to be a church at all in time and one relatively faithful church.
      - This is helpful so those who love Christ can see where they ought to go if they are devoted Christ.
  - b. In 1 Corinthians 11:19, Paul said **For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.**
    - You get a clearer view of who is serving Christ at such times—of who is on the Lord’s side and who is on the devil’s side.
    - The wolves in sheep’s clothing are exposed as wolves and the sheep are exposed as sheep.

TRANS> So you see that not harm, but good comes to Christ’s disciples when He is forced to withdraw and they go with Him.

C. See to it that you are among His true disciples at such times.

- 1. Do not suppose that something has gone wrong.
  - Jesus told us that it would be like this—
    - He told us that we would be put out of the church for His sake if we follow Him.

- And He even told us that when we are, they will be so deceived at times that they will think that they are being faithful to God in casting us out.
2. It is your duty to go with the faithful at such times.
    - Some feel that it is their duty to stay in a church that has forsaken the gospel to try to change it, but once it gets to the place where they reject those ministers and elders who are following Christ, faithfulness calls you to go with them.
      - Jesus does, and you are called to go where He goes, even when it is outside the mainline church (and it often will be).
    - In Hebrews 13:12-14 says: **Therefore Jesus, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.** <sup>13</sup> **Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach.** <sup>14</sup> **For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.**
      - Those who came to Christ in the early church were forced to go with Christ outside the mainline Jewish church.
      - They had to meet separately and to have their own Presbyteries apart from the apostate whole.
  3. Don't be deceived by false ecumenical movements.
    - They essentially teach that we are to be one with those who reject our Saviour.
      - They say, "But Jesus prayed that we would all be one."
      - Indeed He did, but one with Him—not one with those who reject Him and His ways and cling only to His name and the name Christian.
    - Jesus told us it would be like this, so don't let the devil make you think that you are doing something wrong when you leave with Christ.
      - It is an honour to bear reproach for His name.
      - Jesus did it when He was here and so did all the prophets and apostles.
        - Both He and they told us that there would be a great apostasy in the church, an apostasy that would reject the servants of Christ.
        - Let us be among those who go with Christ as His disciples.

TRANS> But just going with Him is not enough.

- There are many who go with Christ when He leaves who are not His true disciples.

### **III. We turn now to look at the multitudes. They always seem to find Jesus when He withdraws.**

A. Mark shows us that they came to Him in droves.

1. In fact, in this passage we have the most detailed account in the Scriptures of how far-reaching Jesus' ministry actually was.
  - Beginning in verse 7, it says: **And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him.**
2. The passage speaks of two groups.
  - a. Those from Galilee are said to be a great multitude that followed Him when He withdrew to the sea.

- That so many went shows us that the opposition of the Pharisees and the Herodians did not deter this multitude or keep them from Christ.
  - Interestingly, the crowds often seem to leave when Christ leaves.
- b. The second group mentioned here are the ones who heard about Him and who came from all directions...
- From Judea and Jerusalem...
    - Of course Jerusalem was in Judea, but it is mentioned to show that even from the great city where the temple was, people went out to Galilee to see Jesus.
  - And Idumea...
    - that the land of Edom which was 200 kilometres to the South... there were Jews living there at this time...
  - And beyond the Jordan...
    - that was the other side of the Jordan...to the east.
  - And then Tyre and Sidon—
    - that was on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, and it was about 80 kilometres to the north of where Jesus was.
3. By being in the open rather than in the confines of the city or the walls of the synagogue, Jesus was actually enabled to minister to an even larger crowd.
- Often, when efforts are made to shut down the ministry of the Lord, it ends up having the very opposite effect—
    - Remember in Acts how they were persecuted and then when everywhere spreading the word?
- B. But sadly many of the multitude are content to be nothing more than part of the crowd... in other words, they do not become Jesus' true disciples.
1. You can certainly see why they were attracted to Him.
- He healed all of their diseases.
    - We are told in verse 9 & 10 of how they pressed around Him to touch Him for His healing virtue...
      - The language suggests that they were actually falling upon Him.
    - It is a picture of a very boisterous mob—a press that was apt to crush Him.
  - Any time you have someone who can heal you, it doesn't matter what else you may think of him, if you have some infirmity, you are going to come to him.
    - And of course even those who had no infirmity wanted to come to see this marvellous thing—out of curiosity or simply for entertainment.
    - And some had political aspirations—they wanted to be in on the revolution they supposed Jesus would bring.
2. Jesus' healings serve us as a beautiful display of His gracious power that delivers us from the curse.
- It shows us how needy we humans are, and how eager we are to get help when we know our need and believe that there is one who can and will heal us.
    - You simply cannot keep people away from such a one.

- There are many today who come to the church where they find acceptance, community, morality, identity, and perhaps help with some of their problems—to find people that are ready to lend a hand, to give them counsel, to encourage them, to relieve them of burdens, and many other things.
3. But how few there are that sense their greatest need of all—the need that only Jesus can meet.
- Of course I am talking about the need for deliverance from sin—both its condemnation and its bondage...
    - How few sense that they are headed for eternal punishment and shame apart from Jesus Christ crucified!
    - And how few are gripped by how loathsome their sin is, how wrong rebellion against God is—so much so that they are desperate to be cleansed from it so that they can serve God?
  - What about you?
    - Do you see your true spiritual need for the saving work of Christ the Lamb of God?
    - Perhaps you have professed your faith and come into the church, but are you actually looking to Christ to deliver you from bondage to sin so that you can serve God?
    - Has the Holy Spirit opened your eyes to show you your true spiritual need of Him, or are you just part of the crowd and no true disciple?
- C. Note that with Jesus, such ignorance is not from a failure on His part to preach the gospel to them.
1. We have seen in the past how He regarded the preaching of the kingdom as of much more importance than His healing ministry.
- Remember when everyone was coming to Him for healing in Mark 1 and Jesus' disciples went to tell Him and He said (Mk 1:38), **“Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.”**
  - He saw preaching as the primary purpose of His present ministry. And verse 39 adds: **And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee,**
    - Again and again we have been told of His preaching.
    - He knew and He knows that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the preaching of the word of God.
      - That is what He did and that is what He has commanded His servants to do until He returns at the end of the age.
      - He did not leave behind a healing ministry except for a short time to confirm the apostles, but He did leave behind a preaching ministry and He left the Holy Spirit to gather in all the sheep that the Father has given to Him.
2. And so here in our text, when these multitudes come, we are told of what Jesus did to enable Him to preach—how He asked for a little boat to be prepared.
- In 3:9 this detail is given to us: **So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him.**

- By this means Jesus was able to sit in the boat and preach to the crowd on the beach without them crushing Him.
  - Matthew 13:2 supplies this detail for us: **And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. 3 Then He spoke many things to them...**
- Whoever was ignorant of the gospel among these multitudes could certainly not point a finger at Jesus.
3. And I call God as my witness that in my ministry to you, I have also preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to you.
- If you do not believe, it is not because you have not been told of your need of Him and His sufficiency as the only Saviour from sin.
  - If you are only part of the crowd and not a true disciple, you will have to answer to God for it.

#### **IV. And now there is one more category of beings that shows up when Jesus withdraws: the unclean spirits.**

- A. We must not suppose that they will leave us alone if we withdraw with Jesus.
1. They come as they have in the past...confessing that Jesus is the Son of God.
    - It is not surprising that they know who Jesus is, for they knew Him when He was their Lord in glory.
    - They knew Him as the one who created them and who created the world, and they knew Him as the one who banished them from heaven for their sin.
      - He is quite familiar to them even though He has come in human flesh.
  2. Their confession makes it clear that they are unclean spirits since almost no one else was making such a full confession of Jesus at this time.
    - The poor wretches that they controlled were certainly not those who could have come to the conclusion that Jesus was the Son of God.
    - It was these spirits speaking through their mouths.
- B. But let the accurate confession of these demons teach you an important lesson...
- A right confession is much more than an accurate confession!
  - These demons remind us that there is more to trusting in Jesus than confessing the right facts.
1. Though they confess Him, they are malevolent enemies.
    - They know who He is, but they hate Him.
    - They do not want Him to save people, nor do they want His kingdom to advance.
  2. There are many men and women who know who Jesus is today and who also confess Him with their lips, but they have not bowed to Him as Lord and received Him for salvation. They are yet without His salvation and forgiveness.
    - Knowledge alone does not save.
    - Knowledge is a component of faith, but it does not necessarily include the personal trust and commitment that is a part of true faith that saves.
- C. And note that Jesus forbids such to confess Him.



- Verse 12 says that He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known.
- 1. He does not approve of the confession, even if it is true, of those who hate Him and who hate His Father.
  - They are not to be His witnesses because they do not represent Him.
  - He commands all such to be silent.
- But perhaps even more importantly,
- 2. He does not want it to be made known to the multitudes that He is the Son of God at this time... not yet.
  - As we have seen, the Jews at this time had certain notions and expectations about the Messiah that were mistaken.
    - If they conclude that He is the Messiah, they will be blinded by them.
    - They will hold to their assumptions and will not be able to learn the truth about Him... namely, that He has come to die for the sins of His people.
  - He wants them to draw conclusions about His identity when they hear His teaching, see His mighty works, and most of all when they see His death, burial, and resurrection.
    - He does not want people to think they know Him when in fact they do not.
    - There were many in the crowd that would have been very happy to follow Jesus as the Messiah in what they understood the Messiah to be,
      - but they would miss the whole point...
      - because the Messiah they wanted was not one who dies to atone for sin and then becomes the source of a new life lived for God.
    - Theirs was a Messiah who gives you what you want instead of as Messiah that atones for sin and then transforms you to be a servant of God.
- 3. There is so much misinformation today about Jesus that we have to be careful about using standard descriptions of Him too.
  - When someone speaks of Him as their *Saviour*, we need to ask them what they mean by that.
    - They may very well mean that He saves them from feeling defeated or from feelings of inadequacy—they may have no sense at all of Him as the Saviour from sin and even less of Him as the Saviour from the wrath to come.
  - When they declare that *God is love*, we must ask them what they mean by that too.
    - *God is love* in that it is His way to live in mutual love within the Trinity and to love all of His creatures...
      - But this is often taken to mean that He does not hate all workers of iniquity and would never send them to hell... that is false...
      - It is a doctrine of love that makes the cross to be unnecessary—where God's love is principally displayed in dying for elect sinners.
  - It is the devil's work as much as it ever was to throw around the right terms relating to Christ and His saving work while distorting the true meaning of those terms.

- He is the master of deception, but Jesus will not allow him to deceive His true disciples.

**Conclusion:**

So today we have learned that Jesus sometimes withdraws from the synagogue or the church because of corrupt leaders.

- Be sure that you are with Him and not with those from whom He has withdrawn.
  - It is our duty to bear witness to the truth, not to lies and falsehood.
- But it is not enough to be merely a part of the crowd that always seems to find Him when He withdraws.
  - They come to Him for certain things, but they do not come for the most important thing: salvation from sin. They miss that.
  - They do not listen to His preaching, but come supposing they already know what they need and what He has to give them.
    - You are only His true disciple when you receive Him as He is revealed in the gospel.
- The devil is hard at work when Jesus withdraws...
  - He wants to keep people from Christ by giving them all the right terms about Christ and His salvation with all the wrong meanings.
  - Jesus will guard us from this if we are His true disciples—He will bring us to His word.

The bottom line is, be sure that you come to Jesus Himself and receive His precious word whether He is inside or outside the camp.

- It is Him and those who cling to Him that we must follow.