

## Focus on Mark 3:20–35

### WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Judith Hoch Wray

Jesus’ family serves as a literary tool to introduce several key themes. The antecedent of the pronoun translated as “people” (v. 21) in the NRSV is unclear, and probably indicates Jesus’ family as the ones who were saying, “He has gone out of his mind.” “Out of his mind” is literally, “he has stood outside.” (Compare today’s idiom, “he is really out of it,” or the RSV “beside himself.”) The question of who is *outside* arises again and again. In verse 31 the family is standing outside, in contrast to their saying in verse 21 that he “has gone outside,” that is, out of his mind.

### WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Wendy Farley

If we transpose this theological vision into our own time, instead of lepers and demoniacs crowding around Jesus, we might see the strange bodies of the disabled. The only ones not in the picture, the ones not pressing in at the doors and windows, desperate and aching to be near Jesus, are the ones who think they know what religion and family life is supposed to look like. Jesus, infinitely patient with the crowd, blasts away at these people. Everyone will be forgiven, except people who blaspheme the Holy Spirit. The inability to tell the difference between the power of the Holy Spirit and the demonic is an *unforgivable sin*.

### SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Don E. Saliers

For us, however, the issue is how we now understand the relationship between discipleship and Christology. More than simply “understand” intellectually, it seems crucial for the churches today to seek to live out that understanding. Living out the form of discipleship Christ bids us follow means a new solidarity with all of humanity. It requires that we learn with him to weep with those who weep and to rejoice with those who rejoice. It asks us to live into the densities of human joy and suffering. It calls us to find ourselves precisely in our willingness to give up our self-absorption. This is a demanding task, requiring a willingness to follow him into a new solidarity with God’s whole family.

### NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,”

*Nibs Stroupe*

We should look for the reality signified by the name “Satan.” Satan does not necessarily mean a personality with horns and a red tail, but it does name a demonic power that is actively engaged against the compassionate and reconciling love of God. This is the reality that Jesus names here, and whether we believe in a person named “Satan” is not as important as hearing about our captivity to the powers of evil signified by “Satan,” powers that continue to seek our allegiance.