

Tenth Sunday of the Year B

Mark 3:20-35

20 Jesus went home with his disciples, and such a crowd collected that they could not even have a meal. 21 When his relatives heard of this, they set out to take charge of him, convinced he was out of his mind.

22 The scribes who had come down from Jerusalem were saying 'Beelzebul is in him,' and, 'It is through the prince of devils that he casts devils out.' 23 So he called them to him and spoke to them in parables. 'How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot last. 25 And if a household is divided against itself, that household can never stand. 26 Now if Satan has rebelled against himself and is divided, he cannot stand either – it is the end of him. 27 But no-one can make his way into a strong man's house and burgle his property unless he has tied up the strong man first. Only then can he burgle his house.

28 'I tell you solemnly, all men's sins will be forgiven, and all their blasphemies; 29 but let anyone blaspheme against the Holy Spirit and he will never have forgiveness: he is guilty of an eternal sin.' 30 This was because they were saying, 'An unclean spirit is in him.'

31 His mother and brothers now arrived, and, standing outside, sent in a message asking for him. 32 A crowd was sitting round him at the time the message was passed to him, 'Your mother and brothers and sisters are outside asking for you.' 33 He replied, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' 34 And looking round at those sitting in a circle about him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. 35 Anyone who does the will of God, that person is my brother and sister and mother.'

Other readings: Genesis 3:9-15 Psalm 129 (130) 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1

In this rather complicated gospel passage we hear about the reaction to Jesus' activity, from his family and from the religious authorities, represented by the scribes.

Members of his family are so concerned about Jesus that they consider taking him home by force to put an end to his ministry. But it is the scribes from Jerusalem who have worked out in their own way that Jesus is in league with the powers of evil, with Beelzebul, another name for Satan. Jesus takes this point up. His actions are constantly challenging the power of evil, so how can he be on the side of evil? He is in fact the one who is strong enough to challenge Satan. The scribes have closed their minds to this possibility; they are unwilling to let the Spirit teach them.

The final verses suggest that the relationships we make in the Christian family are of great significance.

Is the gospel of Jesus challenging to me?

Am I open enough to receive the message which Jesus brings?

Let us pray for those who struggle with the Christian gospel.

Let us pray for those who are stuck in their own dogmatism.