

## Call Me Crazy

Mark 3:20-27, 31-35

In the factory where I once worked, someone had a sign over their workspace that said, “You don’t have to be crazy to work here... but it helps.”

Sometimes, I think we should hang a sign like that over the entrance to the church. Or... print it on our worship bulletins. You don’t have to be crazy to fit in here...but it helps.

After all, Jesus himself was labeled crazy. In the story I just read, Jesus had been busy healing people and driving out demons. This attracted great crowds to the house where they were staying, so that he and his disciples couldn’t even find time to grab a meal for themselves. It also attracted some people who were there for other reasons.

For one thing, Jesus’ family showed up to perform a kind of intervention and bring him home. When they heard that Jesus was making such a commotion, it says that “they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, ‘He has gone out of his mind.’”

News of Jesus’ activities also caught the attention of some of the religious bigwigs, who came all the way from Jerusalem to Capernaum, in order to check him out. What they saw led them to accuse Jesus of being a whole other degree of crazy, saying that he was possessed by the Devil.

Actually, doubting that Jesus was in his right mind was more common than you might expect. Once, when Jesus was summoned to the home of a man whose daughter had died, he told the distraught family that she was not dead, but sleeping. They wondered what kind of nonsense this was. They knew that dead is dead, and any sane person knows there’s no waking up from death, as though it was just a nap. They all laughed at him. That is, until he brought her back to life.

One day, Jesus was preaching to a large crowd in a remote place and it was getting late. His disciples advised him to send the crowd away so they could all get themselves something to eat. Jesus said, "You give them something to eat." And they said, "Hello! There are thousands of people here, and all we have to feed them with are a few loaves and fishes." But, before you could say Doordash, everyone had enough to eat and they were picking up leftovers.

Another time, Jesus told his followers to pack their bags for a trip to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival. "And, oh by the way, when we get there, I will be arrested, put on trial and crucified." Their response was something like, "Aaaand you don't think it would be better to stay *home* and celebrate Passover this year?"

I guess that when it comes to being the Savior of the world, you don't have to be crazy... but it helps. Which also applies to being Christ's disciples. When you look back to the very earliest days of the church, those who witnessed to the Risen Jesus were often mocked for being out of their minds.

On that first Easter morning, when the women who had gone to Jesus' tomb came back with the news that he had been resurrected, it says that the other disciples thought that it was an "idle tale" and did not believe a word of it.

On Pentecost, when the disciples, filled with the Holy Spirit, ran through the streets, proclaiming the gospel in all different languages, there were some who said they were drunk.

When was the last time one of us got called crazy for being a follower of Jesus?

Do we give people a reason to doubt that we are of sound mind because we believe that Jesus really is who he claimed to be?

Do people ever question our sanity because we are willing to prioritize things like caring for God's Creation, being a blessing to others and promoting peace and justice for all people; above things like personal success, fame and power?

If we are honest with ourselves, do some of the things Jesus calls his followers to do ... even sound a little crazy to *our* ears?

Maybe, churches could stand a little more of that Jesus kind of crazy.

Because, the times when Christians are most likely to be called crazy is when they are part of some new thing that God is doing in the world.

And maybe the times when Christians blend in with the way most of the world thinks and behaves toward each other are the times when *we* most need to be possessed by a spirit. The Holy Spirit.

That day when people were calling Jesus crazy, someone came into the house where he was to tell him that his mother and brothers and sisters were outside.

Jesus looked around the room, at the mixed bag of people who were his followers, and he said, "My mother and brothers and sisters are right here. Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

Jesus' mother and brothers and sisters are not just those he is related to by birth and blood.

Whoever does the will of God, that's who Jesus calls family. To be a part of this family, maybe it does help to be a little bit crazy. To be a part of this family of sisters and brothers to Jesus, is to take risks and make sacrifices all based on faith.

Membership in this family means that, as Paul said in his second letter to the Corinthian Christians, "we look not at what can be seen, but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal." Living your life as though things no one else can see are real; doing things that go against the grain of what most people would call common sense; following roads that lead not to fame and fortune, but to service and sacrifice; these are the kinds of behaviors that the world calls crazy.

When I gave my notice at that factory, so I could finish my final year of seminary going fulltime, my supervisor looked at me like I was crazy. "You realize that you'll never make good money being a minister, right?"

Sisters and brothers, the family of kindred spirits called the Church is a family bound together by the conviction that the God who created all things; the God who knows all about us but still loves us enough to have sent his own Son to demonstrate that love for us—even though doing that would get him killed for our sakes; is the same God whose Spirit is still active in our world and in our lives, in ways that challenge the limits of mortal imagination.

Call me crazy, but that's a family I want to be a part of!

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