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# THAT CRAZY JESUS!

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*Mark 3:19-21*



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PASTOR BRAD

a sermon inspired by Bishop Mark Curry

Bishop Michael Curry of the Episcopal Church puts it this way: Jesus was crazy, and still is! In fact, he wrote a book about it called, “Crazy Christians: a Call to Follow Jesus.” In it he asserts that those who would follow him, those who would be his disciples, those who would live as and be the people of the Way, are called and summoned -- and challenged -- to be just as crazy as Jesus. So let’s talk about that today. I think he’s right -- “We need more crazy Christians.”

In today’s Gospel reading we heard these words from NRSV which is the version I usually use, from Mark 3:19-21: “Then [Jesus] went home; and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, ‘He has gone out of his mind.’”

The King James Version of the Bible translates the concern of Jesus’ family for him in these words: “He is beside himself.” The old J.B. Phillips New Testament translates it, “People were saying, ‘He must be mad!’” And New American Standard Bible says, “He has lost his senses.”

The actual Greek word they’re translating is *existemi*, which is used in other places in the New Testament to mean ‘amazed, or astonished, or my favorite, ‘bewitched.’ And the Contemporary English Version says, “When Jesus’ family heard what he was doing, they thought he was crazy and went to get him under control.” - That is, “to restrain, seize, lay hold of, or take custody” of him.

But, let’s not be too quick to judge Jesus’ mom and siblings. I think they had a pretty good reason to be concerned. After all, in Matthew Jesus says, “The greatest among you will be your servant” (Matthew 23:11). Well, that’s kinda crazy.

What the world calls worthless, Jesus calls blessed. Blessed are the poor and the poor in spirit. Blessed are the merciful, and the compassionate. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice to win out. Blessed are those who work for peace. Blessed are you when you are persecuted just for trying to love and do what is good. Jesus was crazy.

He said, “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, pray for those who use you.” That’s crazy.

He prayed while they mocked and scourged and murdered him, “Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.” Now, that’s crazy. Crazy like a ...savior?

We need more Christians who are as crazy as Jesus. Crazy enough to love like Jesus, to give like Jesus, to forgive like Jesus, to ‘do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with God’ -- like Jesus. Crazy enough to dare to change the world from the nightmare it often is into something closer to the dream that God dreams for it. And for those who would follow him, those who would be disciples, those who would live as and be the people of the Way, who call themselves by Christ’s own name? Hang on to your hats, but we, too, are called into this craziness.

Let me give you an example from the New Testament of one of these calls to craziness: Mary of Magdala, Mary Magdalene. And for some reason, Mary always seems to get a bum rap.

Think back to the crucifixion. Crucifixion was execution by the empire for crimes against the state. Legalized lynching, it was public torture -- an intentionally brutal means of capital punishment, an execution designed to send a message that revolution and revolutionaries would not be tolerated. If you were a supporter or follower of the person being crucified, it was dangerous to stand too close during the execution. The only sensible and sane thing to do was to run away - go into hiding.

Having said that, let’s take the attendance of the disciples who showed up at the crucifixion of their Lord. Simon Peter? Absent. James? Absent. Andrew? Absent. Bartholomew? Thomas? Thaddeus? Absent. Judas? Definitely absent. Mary Magdalene? Present and accounted for! That’s a disciple! You know on Good Friday when we sing, “Were you there when they crucified my Lord?” There was a woman named Mary who could answer, “Yes, I was there!” Now, that’s crazy!

Now, it may not be obvious at first, but there’s actually a day to remember crazy Christians. It’s All Saints’ Day, and even though they were fallible, and mortal, and sinners like the rest of us, when push came to shove, the folks we call saints marched to the beat of a different drummer. In their lifetimes, they made a difference for the kingdom of God. There’s a book out now that commemorates all these saints called, “Holy Women, Holy Men.” But they could have called it “Crazy women, Crazy Men.”

One of the people celebrated in the book is Harriet Beecher Stowe. She was born in 1811 into a family committed to the gospel of Jesus, as well as helping to transform the world from the nightmare it often is into the dream that God intends. She is best-known for a work of fiction, “Uncle Tom’s Cabin.”

And in this fiction, she told the truth. She told the story of how slavery afflicted a family, how it afflicted real people. She told the truth of the brutality, the injustice, the inhumanity of the institution of chattel slavery. Her book did back in the 19th-century what YouTube videos of injustices and brutalities do today. It went viral. It rallied abolitionists and enraged those with vested interests.

The influence of that book was so powerful that legend has it that Abraham Lincoln, upon meeting Harriet Beecher Stowe for the first time said, “So this is the little lady who started this Great War!”

A woman of that era, of course, was supposed to write nice stories, not stories that would upset the conscience of a nation. She was supposed to marry well, raise well-bred children, participate in a few charitable activities and be fondly remembered by all who knew her. That was the life she was supposed to have.

But she had been raised in a family that believed that following Jesus means changing the world from the nightmare it often is into the dream that God intends. And sometimes that means marching to the beat of a different drummer. Sometimes that means caring when it’s easier to care less, or standing up when others sit down. Sometimes it means speaking up instead of shutting up. Sometimes it means being a little different – maybe even crazy.

We need some crazy Christians. Sane, sensible, rational Christianity is all well and good -- You know how I love reason and intellect, but that doesn’t always carry the gospel, does it? We need some crazy Christians like Mary Magdalene and Harriet Beecher Stowe. We need Christians crazy enough to believe that God is real, and that Jesus lives on -- crazy enough to follow the radical way of the gospel. Crazy enough to believe that the love of God is greater than all the powers of evil and death. Crazy enough to love our enemies, and to be last when we want to be first.

We need some Christians crazy enough to believe that children don’t have to go to bed hungry; that the world doesn’t have to be the way it often seems to be; crazy enough to believe that there is a way to lay down our swords and shields, down by the riverside; crazy enough to believe that, as the slaves used to sing, “there’s plenty good room in my Father’s kingdom,” because every human being has been created in the image of God, and we are all equally children of God and meant to be treated as such.

When Steve Jobs, died, an old Apple commercial from the 90's went viral on YouTube. It was a commercial that originally aired in 1997 as an attempt to re-brand Apple products. The tag line for the commercial and the company was "Think different," which - I know -- is grammatically incorrect - but I think that's part of the point.

This commercial shows a collection of photographs and film footage of people who have invented and inspired, created and sacrificed to improve the world, to make a difference. They showed Bob Dylan, Amelia Earhart, Frank Lloyd Wright, Maria Callas, Muhammad Ali, Martin Luther King Jr., Jim Henson, Albert Einstein, Pablo Picasso, Mahatma Gandhi; the list goes on and on. As the images go by listen to the poem, which in this version, is actually read by Steve jobs himself:

VIDEO -

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8rwsuXHA7RA&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8rwsuXHA7RA&feature=player_embedded)

*Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels.*

*The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes.*

*The ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules.*

*And they have no respect for the status quo.*

*You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them.*

*About the only thing you can't do is ignore them.*

*Because they change things.*

*They push the human race forward.*

*While some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius.*

*Because the people who are crazy enough*

*to think they can change the world,*

*are the ones who do.*