

# Unrelenting crowds, unceasing prayer, unlikely disciples, unbelieving family, unforgivable sin

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[ 0 : 00 ] Amen We pray that we would hear your voice We pray Lord that we would not harden our hearts And that our hearts would not be hardened But that you would soften them With that oil of the Holy Spirit Hear us and help us we pray In Jesus name, Amen If you could turn back in your Bibles please To Mark chapter 3 A couple of weeks back

Mary and I went to Sky on Monday morning We went away for a couple of nights And I hadn't been in Sky for over 20 years probably I'd driven through at that pace Trying to catch ferries of late But I hadn't been in Sky for over 20 years Since finishing up in school And so in the 48 hours or so that we were there It was good to see some older faces Than I remembered but still recognisable It was good to catch up with the news About some people that I used to know And I'd lost contact with And it was interesting to hear As I then began to ask What happened to this one?

And what happened to that one? And where's this one now? And where's that one now? It was interesting to hear All these characters that I could remember Where they are now What they're doing And one might have thought the same way about Levi Two weeks ago when we were in The Gospel according to Mark We were in chapter 2 And we focused for a period On the calling of Levi You can see that in chapter 2 verses 13 to 18 We met him two weeks ago He was a tax collector And we thought about what that meant He was essentially one of the gangsters of that day In that place I imagine that he must have been a tough man He would need to have been a feared character In order to have got that job Which was a hugely lucrative job And yet a hugely dangerous job He's the kind of guy He's the kind of guy That I think

If you'd been to school with him You'd remember him You probably feared him But what we see here is that Jesus didn't fear him Others did Jesus didn't fear him But he did love him And he made his approach to him And he sought him And he saved him An unlikely character An unlikely chain of events In his life As his colleagues may have said And yet this is what happened Quite a testimony It's a dramatic episode In Levi's life And the question I want to ask In part today Is what happened next with him I've just read about his conversion But that's just the beginning We've heard about the point Where Jesus called him But that's just day one

He follows And that marks the beginning Of his life With Christ And so what did that look like? Would Jesus have a job for this gangster?

[ 4 : 02 ] Would Jesus allow this notorious character To be out in the open? Serving him? Well we'll come back to that In the course of the message today But what I want to look at first today As we return to the section That we were reading Is what happened next In the life and the ministry of Jesus It's fast and furious Mark's gospel Mark just moves from one To the next To the next And immediately And immediately And immediately There's so many episodes So many encounters So many things happening here And the first thing that we see In the section that we read today Was the unrelenting crowds That's the first point Unrelenting crowds Verse 7 Jesus withdrew With his disciples To the lake And a large crowd From Galilee Followed When they heard all he was doing Many people came to him From Judea Jerusalem Idumea And the regions across The Jordan And around Tyre and Sire Because of the crowd

He told his disciples To have a small boat Ready for him To keep the people From crowding him For he had healed many So that those With evil With diseases Were pushing forward To touch him Whenever the evil spirits Saw him They fell down before him And cried out You are the son of God But he gave them Strict orders Not to tell Who he was So there's a lot going on In that little vignette In these verses This is like a snapshot In time That points us forward To the reality Of eternity As we see Jesus In his ministry As he goes from place to place There were so many crowds There were unrelenting crowds Constantly coming To Jesus And those who were diseased They received healing And those who were Demon possessed And troubled

In their minds And their hearts They received deliverance And these few verses Even give us A picture of the Brokenness of this world Back then Still like that now And these verses Also give us A picture of The compassion Of Christ The readiness Of Christ To piece back together And fix What was broken So many people Were struggling So many people Were sad And were suffering There was so much Spiritual oppression All this caused By sin And yet what we see Here is that all Who come

To Jesus Find healing And find peace For their souls Derek Thomas The commentator Says for a moment On the pages Of history It was as if Satan Had been entirely Banished And the kingdom Of darkness Pushed aside For a moment On the pages Of history In the region Of Capernaum On the northwest Shore Of the sea Of Galilee A little glimpse Of the new heavens And the new earth Could be seen Just a glimpse Of it Just a sip These verses As we see Jesus In action They give us A taste for And they point us Forward to the Eternal reality

That he promises To his people Remember the place That John saw In Revelation 21 A place Where there will be No more death Or mourning Or crying Or pain How so?

[ 8 : 27 ] Because now The dwelling Of God Is with men See the difference Here Was the God Man Was with men And women And boys and girls For these moments And everything Changed And heaven Will be heaven Because the dwelling Of God Will be With men And he will Live with them And they will be His people And God himself Will be with them And be their God That's what John was allowed To see As he looked through Into the portal Of heaven It's not much Wonder That these crowds These unrelenting Crowds Pressed in on Jesus And yet In his humanity He had to withdraw For periods To be able To manage them Jesus In his humanity

Could only be In one place At one time He in his Humanity He could only Touch And minister To And heal So many But today In Christ's deity He's everywhere Think about that The same Jesus The same power He's everywhere He's not He's not Withdrawn He is ready And he promises That all Who come to him He will not Drive away But he will Give the healing Of their souls To And it's a promise That That begins In time For those Who will come To Christ For it's a promise That's good For all eternity The unrelenting

Cries That's the first Point The second Point here Is unceasing Prayer Verse 13 Jesus went up On A mountainside The mountains We know already From Mark's Gospel Were the places Often that Jesus Came to pray To his father And that's Implied here In these verses But what's Implied in Mark Is made Express It's made clear In Luke's Gospel In the parallel Account Luke says In Luke chapter 6 Verse 12 On one One of those Days Jesus went up To a mountainside To pray And spent the night Praying to God This is before He selected He chose His disciples On one of those Days Jesus went up Onto a mountainside To pray And spent the night Praying to God And I know this is a point That I have on repeat And I'll continue

To have it on repeat Because we find it On repeat In the Gospels Underlined for us In a thousand Different ways In a thousand Different places Throughout scripture We see The importance And the necessity Of prayer We have another Example here Of what Jesus Was so committed to He was so committed To prayer His prayer life Was unceasing When others Would have Given in To the call Of the crowds Jesus Jesus Withdrew To pray When others Would have Caved to the Pressures Of life Jesus Prayed And especially For Before occasions Of great importance Jesus Prayed And often

The mountains Are indicators Of Important events In biblical history You think about it Think about We could go Various places In the bible But let me just Give you Just a few The giving of the law And God revealed Himself And gave his law To his people Through Moses Where did that Happen It was on the Mountain Jesus glory Would be revealed In the Transfiguration Where did that Happen On the Mountain Jesus glory Would be revealed In the most Gruesome And yet Supremely In the Crucifixion Where did that Happen On the hill On the Mountain And here As Jesus Appoints His disciples Those Who would Go out In his Name With his

[ 13 : 33 ] Gospel message He first Goes to meet With his Father In prayer On the Mountain Now what's The application Here Do we all Need to go And buy Some hiking Boots And Start Clambering Up the Mountains Well to be Honest For some Of us That might Not be A bad Thing In some Way For some Of us It might Not be A bad Thing To take These Devices And iPads And leave Them on The kitchen Table And get The boots On Get away From the Television And climb The mountains Because Up there We have A sense Of the Awesome Beauty Of God's Creation But for Many of us We can't Lift our Bodies

Up the Hillside Anymore We can't Climb the Mountain And we Don't Really Need to But every One of Us Can lift Our eyes To the Hills We may Not be Able to Lift our Bodies Up the Mountain But we Can lift Our eyes To the Hills Psalm 121 I lift My Eyes Up to The Hills Where Does my Help Come From My Help Comes From The Lord The Maker Of Heaven And Earth Now we're Very privileged Where we Live here Because we Have Mountains And hills Around us That are A constant Visual call To unceasing Prayer All around Us we Have These Hills And mountains That speak To us Of the Awesome Wonder Of the

God Who made Us And who Calls us To come To him In prayer Let's pray That God Will Open Our eyes So that We'll see More than The screens That are Constantly In front Of us But they Will see Something of His glory In the Place that He's put Us How much We need To be Praying As a Congregation How much We need To be Praying As Individuals As Families As Couples As a Community And especially Before Significant Events And decisions Let's be Sure That we Pray like Jesus did Unceasing Prayer Unceasing Prayer

The third Point is Unlikely Disciples Verse 14 So Jesus He goes up The mountain Side And he's up There to Pray And in Verse 14 It says There he Appointed Twelve Designating Them Apostles That they Might be With him And that he Might send Them out To preach And to Have authority To drive Out demons Again Let me say Just in the Passing Here we Have the Definition Of what a Disciple is A disciple Is somebody Who's called To be With Jesus Yes Serve him Yes Be useful In his Service But first And foremost A disciple Is called To be With Jesus I know I say It often But it's Something we Must never Lose sight Of When we Hear the Call of Jesus He's calling Us to Come to

Him To receive Forgiveness Of our Sins To receive Him by Faith To become Those who Are in Christ And with Christ But that's Just the Beginning Then day By day By day By day Our calling Is to be With him In the Word In prayer With him So let's Not lose Sight of That But what I Want us To see Here Particularly Is Just the Unlikely Bunch Of people That Jesus Calls to Be with It These are The twelve Verse 16 He appointed Simon To whom He gave The name Peter James Son of Zebedee And his Brother John To them He gave The name Boan Jeris Which means Sons of Thunder Interesting nickname Sons of Thunder I don't know Too much About it I didn't Study Much into That But my My guess

[ 18 : 36 ] Is that They're Called Sons of Thunder For a Reason It's Probably Not Because Of their Calm Temperaments Andrew Philip Bartholomew Matthew Thomas James Son of Alphaeus Thaddeus Simon The Zealot And Judas Iscariot Who Betrayed Him Now Think About This If You Were Choosing Twelve People To Change The World Forever If You Were Choosing Twelve People To Go Out With The Most Amazing Message That Ever Has Been Heard And Ever Will Be Heard Who Would You Call Maybe The Elite The Powerful We Might Want To Get A Few Celebrities On Our Side We Want To Get Some Extra Ordinary Characters People Of Influence We Would Go Seeking Out The Exceptional Who

Does Jesus Call Ordinary Men Very Ordinary Men Who Have We Been Introduced To So Far In Mark's Gospel Well Two Sets Of Brothers Four Fishermen And Then Levi Or Matthew As He's Now Known The Tax Collector The Gangster The Thug What Happened Next In The Life Of Levi After Jesus Called Him To Follow Him Well Levi Having Been Converted Doesn't Become An Embarrassment Within Christ's Followers He's Not Told By Jesus Levi You Know Your History Is Pretty Gnarly Your Reputation Is Not Something That We're Going To Find Easy To Manage In Our PR Department You Stay Out Of Sight Don't Speak

Please Don't Speak You're Going To Put People Off That's Not What Jesus Does He's Not Put Off To The Sight In Case He Puts Other People Off From Coming To Christ Yes He's Been A Bad Man Yes He Has A Terrible Reputation Yes He's A Feared Character Yes He Likely Has Many Rough Edges Still But Jesus Calls Him Not To Be On The Fringes To Be One Of The Twelve And God The Holy Spirit Will Commission Matthew To Write A Gospel We Need To Have Our Thinking Corrected So Often By God In And Through His Word So Often This Is The Way That God Works He Doesn't Use Our Ways He Doesn't Use The People That

We Would Want To Enroll In Our Team Paul Writing To The Church In Corrin Says Not Many Of You Were Powerful Not Many Were Of Noble Birth But God Shows What Is Foolish In The World To Shame The Wise God Shows What Is Weak In The World To Shame The Strong God Shows What Is Low And Despised In The World Even The Things That Are Not To Bring To Nothing Things That Are So That No Human Being Might Boast In The God These Are God's Methods He Doesn't Discriminate In The Way That We Often Do He Doesn't Always Choose The People That We Would Choose He Doesn't Work In Our Ways And That's Both For Our Correction And For Our Encouragement Because

If You're Sitting Here This Morning Thinking What Could I Do What Could Really God Do With Me Or Through Me Given My History Given My Lack Of Gifts Given My Lack Of Strength Given My Lack Of Courage Given My Bad Reputation In The Past Given All The Many Reasons That We So Often Give To God For Why We Are Useless What Could God Do With Me Well The Unlikely Disciples Teach us To Say That Jesus And His Strength Can Do A Whole Lot Even Through People Like You And I Unlikely Disciples Fourth Point Unbelieving Family It's Amazing To Think That

[ 23 : 41 ] In Spite Of The Fact That Jesus Never Sin Never Sin Think About That Never Sin Imagine Growing Up In A House And One Of The Children Never Sins Never Speaks In A Sinful Way Never Thinks In A Sinful Way Never Acts Or Reacts In A Sinful Way You Think In That Kind Of A House With That Kind Of A Child That The Parents And The Brothers And The Sisters And The People Coming Into The House And Looking In Would Say Something Very Very Different About That Boy He Never Sinned Ever And Yet Even The Family That He Lived With At This Point In Jesus Ministry They Didn't Believe In Him They Didn't Believe In Him Verse 20

Jesus Entered A House And Again A Crowd Gathered So That He And His Disciples Were Not Even Able To Eat When His Family Heard About This They Went To Take Charge Of Him Imagine Taking Charge Of The Son Of God They Went To Take Charge Of Him For They Said He Is Out Of His Mind Unbelievable Family For Those Here This Morning Who Are Following Jesus But You Have Family Members Who Are Not That's A Hard Thing Wives Husbands Children Mothers Fathers It's A Hard Thing To Be Following Christ And To Know That You Have Those Who Are Nearest And Dearest To You And They're Not Following That's

A Big Burden It's A Painful Thing And Yet Isn't It Amazing To Think That Jesus Knows How You Feel You Pray For Your Family Members Who Don't Believe You Pray Faithfully For Them You Take The Opportunities That God Gives You To Witness To And They Think You're Mad And They Even Express It Sometimes Leave Me Alone That's Painful But Jesus Experienced That Maybe As a Christian You Try To Go Out And Do The Works Of God You Want To Serve Him There Might Be Those In Your Family In More Subtle Ways Than This I Would Want To Hold You Back Want To Take Charge

Of You Jesus Family Tried To Do That Maybe You've Got Family Members And And They Say Why Do You Have To Take All This Christianity So Seriously I Don't Object To It But You Know Why The Zeal Why Are You Heading Out To Church Again This Evening Why Are You Going To The Prayer Meeting Again Calm down A bit With The Christianity Stuff You Know Come In Watch A Film Together Let's Have A Meal Jesus Family Said That Didn't But He Didn't Listen To Them And Yet He Still Loved Them Verse 31 Then Jesus Mother And Brothers Arrived Standing Outside They Sent Someone In To Call Him A Crowd

Was Sitting Around Them And They Told Him Your Mother And Your Brothers Are Outside Looking For You Who Are My Mother My Brothers He Asked Then He Looked At Those Seated In A Circle Around Them And Said Here Are My Mother And My Brothers Whoever Does God's Will Is My Brother And Sister And Mother Some Might Say This Seems A Bit Harsh This Seems Like Jesus This Seems Like Jesus He's Disowning His Family They're Knocking Saying Come Out And He's Saying No I'm Not Coming Out But Let Me Tell You About My Family Here They Are Is He Disowning The Family That He Was He Was Brought Into And Grew Up In Well No He's Not He's

[ 28 : 48 ] Actually Introducing Us To The Fact That His Family Is A Whole Lot Bigger Than It First Luke Jesus Is Beginning To Teach The Fact That His Family Is Not Just His Mother And His Brothers And His Sisters But His Family Is Everyone Who Is Obeying Him Augustine One Of The One Of The Very Early Church Writers Was A Very Wayward Son In His Earlier Years And He Had A Godly Mother Called Monica And She Prayed And Prayed And Prayed For Her Son Who Was So Wayward And Eventually Monica's Prayers Were Answered And Augustine He Came

When Augustine Came To Christ When The Blood Of Christ Cleansed Augustine Sin Mother And Son Were Brought Together Not Just With The Family Ties In Time But They Were United Through Their Faith In Christ For Eternity We Were More Truly Family That Day Than We Had Ever Been Before Says Augustine And You Know Soon The Family Of Jesus Would Come To Believe In Him Seems They Didn't At This Point But Soon They Would And They Would Be United Through Faith In Christ Not Just For Time But For Eternity So Jesus Was Not Giving Up On His Mother And His Brothers These Words

Know It Keeps Us Up At Night And The Thought Of Having Committed The Unforgivable Sin Is Something That Has Kept Many People Up For Many Nights Martin Lloyd Jones Tells A Story About A Man Who Was Converted In His Eighties He May Have Been Going To Church For Decades Before That But He Sees Christ He Sees His Need He Comes In Faith To Christ In His Eighties And Immediately After Having Come To Faith In Christ In His Eighties He Comes Forward To The Lord's Table And He Takes Communion The Bread And The Wine For The First Time In His Life In His Eighties Gentlemen And Ladies And People In Their Eighties And Their Nineties Take

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those who have committed the unforgivable sin have no concern or fear over it what is it?

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I tell you the truth verse 28 says Jesus all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them what a great promise that is all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them what a great verse that is for the man in his 80s on the doorstep let me tell you sir all the sins and blasphemies of your life are forgiven you because you're trusting in Christ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven he is guilty she is guilty of an eternal sin can we be sure this morning that we will never commit the unforgivable sin no that's the answer for some here no if you persevere in not believing in Christ if you persevere in resisting the Holy Spirit as he strives with you if you hear the voice of Christ calling you to trust him but keep saying week by week no and keep hardening your heart and there may come a point when your heart becomes eternally set in that hardened calloused state and you can't hear anything you can't see anything spiritually and you can't repent and you can't believe and you can't be forgiven and you don't want to be that's the warning so how can we be sure that this will not happen to us well today today if you are still hearing his voice then the

Holy Spirit is still striving with you and if the Holy Spirit is still striving with you there is still opportunity so confess your sin come to Christ today and find eternal forgiveness and eternal rest in him let's pray father we thank you for Jesus your son we thank you for all that we see and that we hear through him in the verses that we've read the compassion of Christ the unpredictability of Christ as he calls and chooses the people that we would not choose to do amazing things for his glory we thank you Lord for the assurance of forgiveness for all who will come to

[ 42 : 30 ] Christ in faith and we do thank you Lord although it disturbs us we thank you for the warning that we have in this passage that speaks to our hearts about the reality of the fact that we can pass the state sometimes of hearing the voice of Jesus say come unto me and rest we pray that every one of us Lord would hear that call today to come to Jesus to come closer to Jesus and we pray that we would not resist that we would not harden our hearts even if we have done for decades but that we would come even this morning and find that eternal forgiveness and eternal rest that is only offered to those who put their faith in Jesus may we not be those guilty of that eternal sin of blaspheming against the

Holy Spirit that may we respond to the strivings of the Holy Spirit to come to Jesus and to find rest in him and then to devote our lives to glorifying him and we ask this in Jesus name Amen We'll close by saying