

Foodstuffs
Mark 3:20-35
Colebrook Congregational Church
Ordinary 10 / Communion Sunday

Today's scripture from the Gospel of Mark follows a common pattern in Mark, where he starts to describe one conflict, then switches to a second one, which is resolved before returning to address the first conflict. The two conflicts usually have some kind of unifying theme in some way. This one is about divisions.

Here it starts with Jesus' family trying to stop Jesus, thinking that He has lost His mind and is making a spectacle of himself. That's the first conflict. Then the scribes from Jerusalem arrive to confront Jesus, saying that He is exorcising demons in the name of a demon, not God. The second conflict.

Jesus resolved the second conflict first with a logical argument, that essentially Satan would not attack himself or his own work; and what Jesus is really doing by exorcising demons is tying up the strong man, Satan, binding evil, and plundering Satan's house of the souls he has captured.

Then Jesus turned back to the original conflict, His mother, brothers, and sisters trying to restrain Him. His response about them is that those who do the work of God are His mother, brothers, and sisters. Jesus has a new family now.

All week, the Spirit has been moving me to preach on a different topic than this story of how a house divided against itself cannot stand. And I trust in the Spirit when I feel Her moving me. A couple weeks ago, I spoke of how I wanted to find some way that we can serve our community; And how the Spirit moved me this past week, was all about that.

Theresa and I really like food, both enjoying it and creating it. She likes watching Anthony Bourdain, I like Alton Brown, and we both watch Iron Chef to get ideas. Whenever she is back here, we end up planning our days based on what sort of food we want to experience. Indian food? Unique Chinese? We're off to New Haven. We plan it out so that we get there in time for Indian buffet for lunch, then walk around or do other things in the

area, so we can grab take out dinner at our favorite Chinese place, then go for a picnic. We want to go the Book Barn, we only go if we can meet up with local friends for dinner. Stuff like that. Her go to comfort food is any kind of fish, and mine is chicken with lots and lots of vegetables.

We have both been lucky with food. Neither of us has ever gone hungry. But that is not the case with everyone.

Several times this week, I found myself in the car hearing about the State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015 Report published by multiple agricultural and food agencies of the United Nations. It stated that over the past twenty-five years, despite a growing world population, the number of hungry or undernourished people has fallen from about a billion people to 780 million people. Roughly 12% of the population. It is a drop of over 200 million people, and half of that was achieved in just the last two years. And with our annual contribution to Heifer International, we played a small part in that!

While a drop in the number of hungry people out there of over 200 million people is great progress, there are still about 780 million who are still hungry. And not all of them are in underdeveloped countries. Some of them are here in our community. I checked our state's statistics. I was shocked to find that every town, every town in our state has hungry and undernourished people! Colebrook, has the third lowest statistic, 29 people, and only Warren and Union has less than us. But like the world numbers, a small number is good, but it's not zero.

Last Monday, Abrah & I met with Lee from the town hall. I asked her how can our church help the people in our community. She told us: Food. She said that a food pantry in Colebrook would go a long way to helping out our community. What she has had to do, whenever someone was in need of food, was to send them to Winsted or Torrington. Our neighbors in need have to go out of town? It doesn't seem right to me.

Lee also told me about her time in Sheffield. The Congregational Church up there started a food pantry and had streamlined their organization of it. They don't even need storage. They collect and box food one day, then the next the

doors are open for a set amount of time for anyone to come pick up a box of food. And that's it. Food in one day, out the next.

I think we can do this too. We already collect food to send down to Winsted, so we can start with holding on to that. We can let it be known around town that there is a drop off for nonperishable food during a set time, like one of my office hours days. Organized and bagged as they come in, and made ready to go out. Then we can designate another day, where anyone in need can come pick up a bag. Our lower lot provides privacy for those picking up, it is away from the more active part of town. And Lee will let those who need to know when that time is. I will be in touch with the pastor who started the program in Sheffield to find out more about what they go through.

I believe that this is doable. With careful planning and preparation, I believe we can do this, and serve a need in our community. Jesus tells us over and over that it is a believer's responsibility to feed the hungry if they have the means and are able to do so. I think we should seriously examine if we really do have the means and ability that I believe we can organize in this town. Jesus also said, in today's scripture, that those who do God's work are His brothers and sisters. So, shall we be Jesus' brothers and sisters?

Prayers of the People

[PAUSE]

Gracious and generous God, creator of all, Giver of sun and warmth; Of the green earth and blue seas; We give thanks for the many blessings, Flowing from you to us, like a basket of spring flowers. Pouring your love into Christ Jesus, Your steadfast promise of love, of Hope, for us, & our faith. May we hear your words calling, us to be your Body. Merciful lover Of souls, tend to those who grieve. We pray for the suffering of this world, of body, mind, and spirit, may your Healing love embrace the pain, Holding it with tender care. Take our worries and the Brokenness of the world and heal it As only you are able. Speak into Our lives and show us the way enact your love, & healing. God of mercy and healing, you who hear the cries of those in need, receive these petitions of your people that all who are troubled may know peace, comfort, and courage...

Especially:

Loving God, open our ears to hear your word and draw us closer to you, that the whole world may be one with you as you are one with us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Psalm 138

I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise; I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness; for you have exalted your name and your word above everything. On the day I called, you answered me, you increased my strength of soul.

All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O LORD, for they have heard the words of your mouth. They shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for great is the glory of the LORD. For though the LORD is high, he regards the lowly; but the haughty he perceives from far away.

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies; you stretch out your hand, and your right hand delivers me. The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.

Mark 3:20-35

...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." And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons." And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered. "Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"-- for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you." And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."