

8.2.09 / Mark 3:7-21

Again, this section follows in direct sequence from last week's section.

What did it mean for those who first heard it?

The areas mentioned encompass the entire Jewish realm at this time (i.e., the remnants of the old Israel) and a few additional adjoining territories. Given the distances involved, and state of travel, this is like learning that someone has driven from southern California to Maine to hear a particular speaker.

"Simon the Cananaean" is an interesting name on this list. If he is really a Canaanite then he is not Jewish, and again Jesus is doing something the Law is against. Many translations render this "Simon the Zealot" in keeping with parallel passages and an older use of "Cananean" which is apparently a word for "enthusiast", and derived independently from any reference to the land of Canaan. Simon, then, is probably one of the rabid Jewish nationalists, of the sort who would eventually start an open and catastrophic revolt against Rome. (One of these groups even took the name "Zealots".)

Simon's new name, Peter, means "rock". Boanerges is explained in the text. These new names might be worth briefly discussing.

- 1) A theme in this section is Jesus' great popularity. Why is Jesus so popular? Are the people who crowd around him people who get it, or are they acting out of selfish motives or bad information?
- 2) We saw in the first exorcism story that Jesus silenced the demon who identified him as the Son of God. Here we see the same thing. Why?
- 3) Why a mountain? Why twelve? (This may have something to do with re-enacting some Old Testament event.)
- 4) Why apostles? Why not grant these powers to the vast crowds? Why these men, and not some others?
- 5) What is Jesus' family thinking? Why does Mark tell us what Jesus' family is thinking? (Why is that important to understanding what is happening?)

What does it mean in our current context?

1) Is Jesus still popular? Is Jesus popular, or unpopular, for the right reasons or the wrong reasons? What do people think about Jesus (there may be several groups of people, for whom there will be different answers)? How can we make sure that Jesus is popular or unpopular for the right reasons?

2) Would Jesus be popular if everyone knew who he was and what he was about? Why or why not? When people "edit" Jesus, what parts of him do they tend to remove? Does this help with the first part of the question?

3) Jesus appoints Judas to be an apostle. What might we learn from this about dealing with unpleasant people?

4) What might Jesus' ministry model say about how we should go about ministry? Or is his model simply a product of his time and culture, and other models make more sense for our time and culture? Or is Jesus' model making claims about him that we shouldn't make for ourselves?

Weekly Questions to Ask the Group

What does Jesus show us about God's nature in this passage?
How are we convicted to live differently in light of this passage?