

Lent Day 2
February 11, 2016

Reading: Mark 3.20-35

Reflection

Our culture is alright with religion, but can't stand discipleship. I remember after I came to Christ in my twenties and started Bible College right away a lot of my friends were uncomfortable, but some cautioned — religion is okay as long as it's in moderation. The message was, basically, "don't take this too seriously, or too far." But, Scripture puts the lie to any such notions of a safe discipleship.

In this passage Matthew intertwines two stories: one of his family and one of the religious rulers. For his family's part it seems they have concluded he is mentally ill. He seems to be so caught up in this role of his he isn't even taking good care of himself — he's not eating well! When they arrive at his door Jesus' asserts that his true family is the disciples there with him. This became a common feature of the early Christians; become a Christian and lose your birth family. That's the radical nature of discipleship.

Then we have the official religious leaders. For whatever reason, they have decided that what Jesus is doing cannot be from God. Perhaps because it didn't go through the proper official channels. So, they attribute what Jesus is doing as demonic power — magic. In short, they are calling good evil, and by rejecting Jesus' work (which would leave people in their sorry conditions) they are calling evil good. That is another dimension of the early Christians they were despised by everyone. Again, the radical nature of discipleship.

Here we are today, 21st century Christians. The culture wants us to quietly and privately keep our beliefs to ourselves. Practice moderation and you'll be allowed to continue to be a part of polite society. This, of course, blunts our discipleship into belief-ism. Lent however, calls us back to radical discipleship PRACTICING our beliefs and inviting society to reject us.

We're also at risk of being made the villain. We don't have to go very far to see examples of Christians being called evil for holding to their convictions. So to practice Lent — to do something like fasting — will draw more than criticism, it can draw hatred. Again, this is the call to let go of this world to gain it.

That is the last move of the passage. We are apart of Jesus' family when we gather to him and we do his father's will. That is what it is to gain the kingdom and that is the hope and desire for ourselves and our world. We don't embrace radical discipleship because we want to alienate people or be rejected and despised. We embrace it because through our faithful living others might be set free as well to practice radical discipleship and kingdom citizenship.

Prayer

Lord and Father, you are our refuge and shelter, to you we turn. Help us to let go of the things of this world so that we can lay hold of you with all we are and all we have. Amen.