

I'm Foolish for God. What about you?

Mark 12: 38-44

In his short, but world changing ministry, Jesus Christ turned the then known world upside down, and still encourages us to an unconventional way of living today, by a inside out way of thinking.

I need to ask you a question here today. Are you brave and encouraged enough to be called crazy and not get angry? A person who is called a Jesus freak, a person who is in contact with Jesus day and night. A person who keeps Jesus in the front of their life to the dismay of others.

Jesus spent his life and ministry providing and promoting examples of a craziness in thinking, urging his disciples others to join in the crazy pursuit of fulfillment and faithfulness, in his name.

He insisted that the Kingdom of God would be filled with crazy people who dared to believe that the first would be last, the greatest would be the least, the strongest to be the weakest, and the meek will get it all, because they will inherit the earth .He preached that only the pure in heart will see GOD.

But how would you define a crazy person? Is it one who has lost it all? Is it one who should be locked up? Is it one who does not follow conventional wisdom of the world? Just what makes a person crazy?

Could being crazy mean eating dinner for breakfast, or eating different hours of the day. Would one be considered crazy if they ate locusts and honey? Would one be considered crazy if they said, "I AM the resurrection and the Life, no man can get to the Father, but through me"?

Could being crazy also mean taking a risk by doing something considered foolish, weak or strange? I mean those things looked upon by others as purely crazy no question. Could taking self-risk or doing things that are more daring be a sign of maybe one is having a crisis? Are you afraid to be looked at as a strange, weak and foolish person because others will view you as a couk, or crazy? Do you really worry about what others think of you, given God's role in your life and the mission that you are on for Him?

IN his book entitled, *Be Bigger Than You Are*, Brian B. Walker gives advice for dealing with people who want to think the worse of you. “Don’t worry about a come back, or telling them what is on your mind. Let it go.”

“Be bigger than you are”, by taking it and then let it roll off of your back like the duck in water.

But you must know for sure that we are talking about God given roles. Not man or earthly roles.

Jesus called this activity being a peacemaker, a servant who by their action makes the last come first, helping to exalt the meek and lowly over the loud and boisterous, the lowly over the strong.

A truly crazy person Jesus was constantly turning conventional practices and ideas on their heads, remember it was in his gene pool, being the Son of GOD, and no respecter of persons.

But if there was ever a race of crazy people, it was the Israelites, who became the Jews.

They began with Abraham and Sarah, two crazies, who had the idea that although they were in their nineties, GOD called them to leave their home, and go off to a new land to become parents. First of a son and then to an entire nation through their grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Whenever an obstacle of great importance confronted the Israelites, they resorted to faithfulness. It appears that they only called upon GOD in crises.

It was though such a circumstance that GOD sent Moses to Egypt to insist that the great and powerful Paraoh “Let My people go”. He was crazy, but had an even greater faith. He could have also been killed, but believed that the voice that spoke to him in the desert would protect him.

Joshua qualifies as a crazy person, “He took an army without weapons for warfare and marched around a city for seven days and the walls fell down. Though his craziness God gave him the victory.

But GOD wasn’t finished yet, because in a long conquered territory, He taught us another lesson about his difference. In the little city of Nazareth, our

Savior Jesus lived and grew up. The saying was, “could anything good come out of Nazareth”, as if God had made a mistake in hiding Jesus out of the limelight until the right time for him to surface at the Jordan River.

Throughout his unpredictable lifetime, Jesus was with the underdog, performing crazy deeds.

You could find him eating with tax collectors and publicans, associating with prostitutes, lepers, the poor, the sick and the uneducated. According to Moses’ laws who could do such a thing?

Jesus became popular, but risked it all by traveling to Jerusalem and angering the religious powers that be, which believed that they had all of the wisdom about such things to within an inch of their patience and then beyond their tolerance. They killed him for his crazy and uncompromising way.

The ending of Jesus’ life and work on earth was the craziest commitment of all time, because of his passion, and finally his ascension culminates in all of creation’s redemption. We thank the Lord for, that good deed.

Unfortunately, too often the church forgets that its heart lies in trusting GOD’S craziness rather than human craftiness.

We seem to be more comfortable rebuilding, carefully and dully all of those wrong forks and ruts in the road to faith that Jesus spent so much time trying to destroy. It was the role of Jesus to break, and tear down the barriers, that kept man from truly worshipping GOD the Father.

Like the lambasted scribes, we want to wear the long robes to distinguish us as righteous, educated and respectable. We prefer to live so that we might receive honor and recognition in the market place, the temple, and at banquets, rather than risking ourselves and our status by practicing Jesus’ upside down, inside out, crazy attitudes towards life and faith.

However, even as the church, resist Jesus’ call to act like a crazy person other institutions are beginning to recognize the creative power of such an approach. Upside-down thinking is like brainstorming. It is easy to think of violent objections to such thought and idea. But it can be done, and would be unwise to destroy, because that methodology will stop progress, before it has had a chance to get started, thus stopping the free flow of ideas in their tracks, before

they have had a change to led to other ideas. It is always easy to listen to a new idea and say why? But it is much easier and more exciting to look at a new idea and say, why not?

Jesus was always saying why not. “Why not associate with the tax collectors? Why not heal the Syno-Phoenician women’s daughter? Why not ride into Jerusalem on a donkey rather than on a beautiful warhorse with all of its bling? Why not is a response that opens doors for change?

Jesus called the twelve disciples to be agents of change and even people of faith in future generations; people who refuse to give yesterday’s answers to tomorrow’s problems. We are called not to simply be status quo, but to reach out and ask why not?

Jesus calls us to actually construct change, we are to be builders of change, building on our past, and yet making new patterns to deal with the new future we will confront and encounter.

Go on to be a crazy Christian. Try it, you might like it.

Jesus’ teachings from Mark are part of a longer section beginning in chapter 11 that confronts and challenges the “organized religions” of his time. One by one, Jesus engages in debate, discourse, sometimes bitter and often harsh criticism or denunciation of and against the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Scribes, the Herodians, and Temple religion in general. His indictment of the religious-political-economic establishment is summed up when he accuses the leaders of having transformed the Temple into a “den of robbers”.

Jesus’ relationship with the Pharisees (whom some biblical scholars argue he seldom if ever encountered) and Sadducees, (whom he vigorously opposed). With the exception of the exchange between Jesus and the scribe in 12:28-34, the Scribe are uniformly presented as hostile towards Jesus’ teachings and treacherously trying to undermine his authority. Jesus’ words in 12:38-40 are used to suggest little respect for the scribal office as it was allegedly practiced in those days. Verse 38 opens with a clear and certain warning, “Beware the scribes...”

The remainder of Jesus’ indictment is that he characterizes the scribes as ones who “like to walk around in long robes.” It has been suggested that this unusual reference might be either to a long garment that developed into the tallit (prayer shawl) worn by pious Jews while praying, or to the practice of wearing

special Sabbath day garments. By wearing “long robes,” the scribes are apparently expecting to garner yearned-for honor and prestige based on their enhanced appearance alone (they seek to be “greeted with respect in the marketplaces” [38b]). These scribes, prancing about in their often-cheap finery, have no real authority (see Mark 1:22). However, they continuously try to present an imposing, fake face to the people. When we look at Jesus’ own person: sporting no elaborate dress, traveling with a rag-tag band of followers, but speaking and teaching with true authority. Herein lies the basis for Jesus’ warning. The ones who look authoritative are not; the one who appears humble and unimportant commands attention and authority.

The longing for recognition extends outside the Temple to every facet of life- from the marketplace, which was (the center of economic activity) to the synagogue, (the center for study and prayer) to formal feasts and celebrations (the center of prestigious social life). In all these situations, Jesus has already requested that his disciples always take the low road (see 9:35; 10:31; 10:43,44), insisting that to be last is to be a servant and must be the desire of a true follower. Scribes and disciples are thus easily positioned as exact opposites. The disciples being servants and obedient, followed Jesus’ orders.

Verse 40 indicts the scribes even more thoroughly; for it focuses not just on, the showing of importance by a pompous exterior cultivated by religious activities, but accuses them of gross professional misconduct. Part of the scribe’s duties were to carry out the stipulations of Judaic law by acting as trustees for the inherited estates of widows and orphans because women were not to inherit money or property. Orphans had no parents and usually lived with whomever would take them in or maybe on the street. The suggestion in verse 40 is that they were guilty of transgressing the legal safeguards protecting widows and orphans. In fact, they were taking the money from these estates for their own personal use. Jesus called them out, as thieves and crooks.

We must also remember that anti-Temple and anti-cult themes define this whole section of St. Mark and gives clarity to the second half of Jesus’ condemnation in verse 40b. Jesus suggests that these long prayers said for the sake of appearances were not only spiritual valueless, they were draining the resources of those who needed it the most. The helpless, dependent widows and orphans, because this worthless show frightened them into believing that GOD would not bless them without giving a donation to the cause. No wonder Jesus predicted the condemnation of these self-righteous religionists.

So being made aware enabled me to see the thrust of Jesus' observation in verse 41-44, because it takes on a new meaning. Whereas the institutional church has used the "widows mite," as a kind of ecclesiastical fund-raising text, it actually remains within the context of Jesus' teachings against the religious establishment.

That Jesus is still teaching is indicated by his physical location. He sat down opposite the treasury, taking up the traditional position used by the rabbis when conducting their classes. Having placed himself directly across from the financial collection center for the Temple, engages his disciples in one final lesson. Singling out the widow's gift should not be seen so much as praising her devotion and selfless generosity, as it should be a backdoor, backhanded indictment of the religious system that allows such injustice to exist in the name of GOD. Jesus praises the widow while he condemns the whole hierarchy of the Temple whose greed and greed for personal riches make such contributions necessary. Having pronounced His final judgment upon the cultic system, Jesus now leaves the Temple with his disciples, never to return. It was now time for GOD to be glorified.

Paul tells us in, 1 Cor.1: 26-29. Has GOD made foolish the wisdom of the world? And in words that ring through the ages to all called by GOD to minister: Consider your call, brethren: not many were noble born; but GOD chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, GOD chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, GOD chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are no, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human might boast in the presence of GOD.

You can

1. Call me foolish, but I still believe that Jesus loves me. This I know ...
2. Call me foolish, but I still believe that The B-I-B-L-E, yes.
3. Call me foolish, but I still believe that What Can Wash Away My Sin? ...
4. Call me foolish, but I still believe that Jesus is the ... [Sweetest Name I Know].
5. Call me foolish, but I still believe that I've Got a Home in Glory Land That ...
6. Call me foolish, but I still believe that I've Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy, [Where?]
7. Call me foolish, but I still believe that Because He Lives, ...
8. Call me foolish, but I still believe that Be Not Dismayed What E're Betide, ...
9. Call me foolish, but I still believe that Soon and Very Soon ...
10. Call me foolish, but I still believe that My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less ...
11. Call me foolish, but I still believe that Surely, the Presence of the Lord is in This Place.