**Gospel**: Mark 3:20-35

and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. 21When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, “He has gone out of his mind.” 22And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, “He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.” 23And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? 24If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. 26And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. 27But 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.

28“Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; 29but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”— 30for they had said, “He has an unclean spirit.”

31Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. 32A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.” 33And he replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” 34And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! 35Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

**Message**: Making the Leap

Over the centuries people, women and men, have bucked convention, acted counter-culturally, thought outside the proverbial box in order to bring new ideas to the public awareness changing the status quo. Whatever the change, it may have been easy or gradual to introduce new concepts or inventions/discoveries. The wheel and axle caught on rather quickly, along with the control and use of fire, both making life a lot easier, more comfortable, and delicious. Other concepts, however, were met with considerable resistance. Copernicus’ theory of a heliocentric solar system (the earth revolves around the sun, rather than the earth being the center and the sun revolving around earth) was met with disdain from both the scientific and religious communities. Martin Luther faced death with his treatise that we are saved by faith rather than works. Wars have been fought to establish governments in which the leader is elected from among the people rather than one born into a particular family. Moving right along, women had, and may still have, an up-hill struggle to convince others of their abilities to be doctors of medicine, chemists, physicists, CEO’s in business, and even pastors. For those of us of a certain vintage, remember when the Beatles came to the US and our parents’ reaction to their hair cuts—or lack thereof? Making a leap from what has commonly been accepted thought, breaking with convention, and opening avenues of new thought and exploration for the benefit of all!

Jesus was no exception. Poverty and illness, according to Jewish religious authorities, were the result of sin. Someone had done a no-no or two, and this was God’s resulting punishment for an individual or a group. Religion can be a powerful tool for maintaining control of a population. Present an angry vengeful God, who does rescue and save, but was ready to strike down any who ventured outside the established order. Rome did it’s best to ensure that control of the populace was maintained through fearful military brutality. Large gatherings were frowned upon as they could lead to a disturbance at the least or a major uprising. Jesus had been with the people all day and was trying to eat dinner. His teachings were novel: This God they worshiped is Loving and forgiving desiring peace and prosperity for all. His words were soothing and generated hope. His touch brought healing and relief. The crowds kept coming to him, crowds that consisted of the misfits and crazies, the poor, the outcasts, the sick, the disgruntled, that filled the landscape and spilled out of the house and into the street. If the political powers in the area felt that these crowds were a threat, the soldiers might use force to disband them violently disrupting any shred of peace they may have enjoyed. The religious authorities had other concerns. This is not what had been established over generations; plus this shift in perspective threatened their tenuous hold on their own importance. His biological family was anxious, not only for his safety, but (especially?) for theirs. *Are you crazy, Jesus? You can get us all in trouble*. Think back. Was there a time when you, or a sibling, or one of your children had an idea that was a little or a lot out there? You may have had a quiet conversation pointing out possible pit-falls or speed bumps. Did you or they listen to the logic that may have dissuaded them? When our kids were early teens, “tails” were a hair style: a thin braid at the back of the neck. Our boys had them for months. Larry, Mr. 1950’s ra ra, didn’t notice until they were walking ahead of us on a trip to Niagara Falls. You could smell the smoke when he put on the mental brakes to readjust.

Jesus was on a mission. He knew who he was and what he had to do. His mission was doing the will of God who had sent him by doing the works of God for the people of God. Jesus, the Son of God, came to reveal the love of God for all creation, particularly for humanity, whom He created to be in joyous relationship with God and with each other while enjoying the gifts and blessings of earth. Jesus is not only teaching this (the Beatitudes), he his living this. His life and ministry are all about healing, the power of love to bring about wholeness and restored relationships with God and people and people with each other. All were included. One did not have to be born into an exclusive social network. They did not have to attend a particular synagogue/church. They did not have to attend any synagogue/church. Worship—giving thanks and praise to Almighty God—can happen anywhere. Those who did/do not oppose the works of Jesus are for Jesus. Those who do the will of God—following the example of Jesus, whether or not they profess and adhere to a formal or recognized faith, a different faith than the one you or I follow, are working **with** Jesus. What are the works of God according to the will of God? Do no harm—to people or creation. Do good—to people and for creation. Love God.

Each year UM churches report to Conference regarding missions within the community and in the world at large. We have a food cupboard, give gifts to the less fortunate at Christmas, especially children, provide clothing, support Family Promise and families experiencing homelessness. Whoever receives a child in mercy, whoever is mindful of widows and orphans, whoever gives so much as a drink of water does this to and for Jesus. We visit, provide transportation, write and send gifts to the prisoner. There are so many things we do that may seem small or minor that have a huge effect on the healing of bodies and spirits. We may never know or fully realize the impact the smallest gesture of kindness may have on an individual or family—a simple smile or hello to a stranger in the store. (I can’t pick out my own lobster because I make friends so quickly.) In the process of helping in one area, we learn of another possibly even wider area of need. Through prayer and discernment, or the proverbial 2 x 4 on the back of the head, we feel pulled toward that endeavor. And so, we get involved.

Jesus’ family was concerned for his well-being. His teachings and actions were drawing attention from beyond the confines of their small community. They wanted to protect him. Family stayed with family and took care of family. Who in their right mind would put themselves out there telling us to love and himself loving and healing the sinful and unclean? Who would risk being near anyone demon possessed? It could be contagious. There is always risk in doing the will of God. There will always be opposition with many reasons of why not, logical or not, self-serving or not. We cannot be the servant who buried his one talent until the master returned. The money or ability was wasted. (Like the manure—it doesn’t do any good unless it’s spread around.) Whenever we set out on a new adventure, we increase the size of our immediate family. The people we work with on an endeavor become work-wives or work-husbands so much time is spent on the task. You may be the wise parent who mentors the younger member, or you yourself are the recipient of good counsel. The women who traveled with Jesus, supporting his ministry out of their own monies were as much a part of the family as were the 12 in the inner circle of disciples. Who are my mother, my sisters and brothers? Jesus said, “Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother.” We become the family of God as God intended.

There is as much religious protocol now as there was in the deep past. Jesus tells us to make the leap from dedication to the mechanics of religion, or non-involvement in any religion, to open-hearted love of and God and God’s beloved disfigured humanity. Let **us** discern the will of God for the people of God. The Lord be with you.

**Prayers of the People/the Lord’s Prayer**: Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me bring love.  
Where there is offence, let me bring pardon.  
Where there is discord, let me bring union.  
Where there is error, let me bring truth.  
Where there is doubt, let me bring faith.  
Where there is despair, let me bring hope.  
Where there is darkness, let me bring your light.  
Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.  
O Lord, grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved as to love,  
for it is in giving that one receives,  
it is in self-forgetting that one finds,  
it is in forgiving that one is forgiven,  
it is in dying that one awakens to eternal life.

**Prayer of Thanksgiving**: Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits you have given us; for all the pain and insults you have borne for us. Most merciful Savior, help us to know you more clearly, love you ore dearly and follow you more nearly for your own sake. Amen.

**Benediction**: Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. 16So we do not lose heart. Go in God’s peace to love and serve the Lord.

**Old Testament**: Genesis 3:8-15

They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” 10He said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” 12The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.” 13Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent tricked me, and I ate.”

14The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. 15I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.”

**New Testament**: 2 Corinthians 4:13 - 5:1

13But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—“I believed, and so I spoke” —we also believe, and so we speak, 14because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. 15Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. 16So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. 17For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, 18because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.