

**Introduction**

1. I don't like being in the midst of a large crowd. Do you?
  - a. Have you ever been to a concert, sporting event, or even shopping on Black Friday when you were pressed together in a big crowd waiting for the doors to open?
  - b. It's hot, smelly, and invades your personal space with elbows and knees.
  - c. Jesus was a big attraction. People came to see him from far away.
  - d. Everywhere he went there was a crowd of people pressing in on him and his disciples wanting to experience a miracle of healing.
  - e. Today's passage documents the crowd around Jesus and the pressure they put on him.

**2. Read Mk 3:7-12.****A. Jesus Retreated and the Crowd Followed (7-8)**

1. This passage marks the end of the cycle of five conflicts between Jesus and the Pharisees.
  - a. For the time being Jesus withdrew from the conflict.
  - b. More conflict would occur between Jesus and Jewish leaders in Jerusalem during his last week of life.
  - c. Jesus went from the synagogue back to the Sea of Galilee as he had done in Mk 2:13 in an earlier attempt to escape the pressing crowd.
  - d. He took his disciples (Gk., *matheton*) with him. Perhaps he hoped for some quiet time just with them by the seashore.
2. However, a large, growing crowd followed after Jesus.
  - a. Jesus had experienced crowd problems before (cf., Mk 1:33, 2:2, 2:15). But now the problem was even bigger.
  - b. The people came from:
    - 1) Galilee – mostly Jews and some Gentiles from the immediate region around the Sea of Galilee
    - 2) Judea and Jerusalem – south of Galilee - predominately Jews
    - 3) Idumea (i.e., Edom, the ancestral home of Herod)– southeast of Judea – mix of Jews and Gentiles
    - 4) “regions across the Jordan” (i.e., Perea, The Decapolis) – mostly Greeks
    - 5) around Tyre and Sidon (i.e., Lebanon) – northwest of Galilee – mostly Gentiles
  - c. William Lane notes that “The several districts enumerated are important in the general scheme of the Gospel. In the course of the narrative Jesus is active in all the places specified in Ch. 3:7f. with the exception of Idumea. His entrance into Galilee is reported in Ch. 1:14. He visits the Transjordan in Ch. 5:1, the regions of Tyre and Sidon in Ch. 7:24, 31, the territories of Judea and Transjordan in Ch. 10:1 and enters Jerusalem in Ch. 11:11. The summary statement in Ch. 3:7f. suggests that the Lord's astonishing authority awakened an active interest in his person over a wide area and that Jesus responded to this interest by visiting the districts from which the multitude came. Jesus' own outreach within and beyond Palestine proper anticipates and authenticates the church's mission to the world” (William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 129-30).
  - d. Jesus drew attention from a wider circle than just Galilee and ethnically more than just Jews. He was on a mission from God for all people and his ministry attracted them all.
  - e. These large crowds were potentially dangerous since Jesus could be accused by the Romans of leading an insurrection/revolt.
  - f. They put physical, political, and spiritual pressure on Jesus.

**B. Dealing with the Crowd (9-10)**

1. It was a scene of great confusion with people pushing, shoving, and literally falling into Jesus, like the mad rush on Black Friday as the doors open.
2. Jesus had his disciples prepare a boat.
  - a. The boat may have been a means of escape, if the crowd got too large or unruly.
  - b. The boat would also be a place from which he could speak to the people without being crowded into the water (cf., Mk 4:1ff).
  - c. The crowd wanted to touch him and be healed physically.
  - d. Remember that Jesus' primary mission was to bring the good news of the coming of God's kingdom and to proclaim the need for repentance and faith (cf., Mk 1:15).

3. Jesus continued to “heal many” – both the physically ill and the demon possessed (10).
4. The people did not care about Jesus’ need for rest or for time with his disciples. They really didn’t care about his message of the coming of God’s kingdom. They simply wanted to be healed.
  - a. The crowd was getting out of control in a frenzy to be near Jesus. Their intent was physical healing and not spiritual growth.
  - b. Warren Wiersbe writes, “Our Lord had now reached a crisis in His ministry. Great crowds were following Him, but their interest was not in things spiritual. The religious leaders wanted to destroy Him, and even some of Herod’s friends were getting involved” (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Diligent*, 41-42).

### C. Dealing with Impure Spirits (11-12)

1. In addition to the demanding crowd, Jesus had to deal with impure (Gk., *akatharta*) spirits – demons!
  - a. The demons he cast out fell before him and acknowledged Jesus as “the Son of God” (11).
  - b. We have seen this before in Mk 1:24, where a demon call him “Holy One of God.”
  - c. Perhaps they hoped to gain control or power over him by identifying him by his true name, but their attempt to control him did not work.
  - d. Lane notes, “. . . the presence of the demons and their attempts to disarm Jesus confirm that the withdrawal to the sea provokes a confrontation with Satan. It is like a return to the wilderness where Jesus was tempted by the adversary of God. In the encounter with the demonic, Jesus affirms his Sonship and the decision to submit to the judgment of God” (Lane, 131).
  - e. James Brooks adds that “Mark probably intended to contrast what the demons acknowledged as a fact with what the religious leaders were not willing to consider as a possibility” (James A. Brooks, *Mark*, 70).
2. Jesus gave the demons “strict orders not to tell others about him” (12)
  - a. We have encountered this Messianic Secret three times so far (i.e., Mk 1:25, 1:34, 1:43).
  - b. There are many possible explanations for Jesus’ command for silence from the demons.
  - c. I believe that the demons were sworn to silence lest they, like the crowds, hinder Jesus’ ministry by drawing too much attention too soon from the Jewish and Roman leaders. Jesus needed more time to teach and proclaim the gospel before his sacrificial death for the sins of the world.
  - d. Daniel Akin adds, “A demonic declaration of His deity will not help His mission. It is both the wrong source and the wrong time. Jesus will be fully revealed not by demonic confession but by the cross of Calvary” (Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Mark*, 71).

### D. Reflections

1. “In some ways Jesus was leading a rebellion against traditional religion” (Wiersbe, 44).
2. “Expect to be pressured by those who want something from you (3:7-12). They will impose on you (3:7-10). They will seek to hinder you (3:11-12)” (Akin, 69). Stay on track with God and fulfill the mission He has given to you.
3. Those who work hard for the Lord and are successful are often expected to work even harder. Know your limits. You are human. Even Jesus needed to withdraw from the crowd for times of renewal (cf., Mk 1:35, 3:13). If Jesus needed time alone with His Father, how much more do we need it?
4. “We must not allow ourselves to be manipulated by ungodly agendas regardless of the praise we may be paid, the positions we may be proffered, or the prosperity we may be promised” (Akin, 71). We must not bend to the demands either of the self-righteous or the selfish.