

Mark

“The Penalty of Popularity”

3:7-12

- I. **Introduction**
- II. **Vs. 7-8 Jesus Christ “Superstar”**
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I. **Introduction**

So far in Mark’s record of Jesus we have seen Mark gather stories that illustrate two truths, today we will start the third, all of which distinguish Jesus as superior to what the Roman reader would have known as a world leader and son of god.

- **Authority of His Word**: At His command and over the physical and spiritual realms (the seen and unseen) things happened according to that word. All had to obey and come into compliance at His word. There was no physical force or coercive threats, just objects surrendering to His Word!
- **Jesus’ insight over His realm**: He had great knowledge over all of His creation especially humanity. He didn’t behave like others when dealing with people, He exhibited behavior towards people as His focus was never upon Himself. This alone convinces me that apart from divine inspiration no man relying on human wisdom and knowledge could have written any of the gospels.
- The 3rd division starts here in chapter 3 verse 7 and runs through chapter 6 verse 6. This section deals with **how He handled His increased popularity and notoriety**.

Each of those three areas are enough singularly to convey that Jesus was far above every other person who has ever walked this earth. Combined the portrait is utterly amazing and is evidence alone that Jesus is the Son of God. It is clear that all the gospel writers saw the same person and that He cannot be a creation of their combined imaginations.

They would have had far greater chances to paint the ocean blue as born blind artists than to have ever captured the likeness of Jesus out of the sea of humanity.

II. Vs. 7-8 Jesus Christ “Superstar”

Vs. 7-8 In response both to His increased popularity and pharasitical notoriety Jesus “*withdrew*”. It is interesting to note that 11 times in Mark’s account he records Jesus “*withdrawing*” from such popularity. Most of the time it was to pray, others it appears just to rest or have time alone with His disciples. Other leaders might have used increasing popularity to promote themselves and their agendas and parlayed that into power over their opposition. To our Lord His time here on earth was never about advancing Himself it was always about advancing the will of the Father. Mark uses the word “great” in front of the word multitude and the Greek word indicates an exceptionally large crowd that didn’t spontaneously gather. Based upon verse 8 this great multitude took some time to assemble.

What had attracted these great multitudes was they “**heard** *how many things He was doing*”. The word “*heard*” in the Greek is in the present tense meaning that they “**kept hearing**” as Jesus “**kept doing** wondrous things”. They came from areas across the Arabian Desert to the west and in the east up the Mediterranean to Lebanon as well as all of Israel. We are not talking in terms of a few thousand but rather in terms of tens of thousands. **People were drawn to Jesus because of “*what He did*” more than “*what He said*”. Generally speaking people are far more interested in their bodies than they are their souls in their health than their holiness!** We live in a time of mass communication when a video often goes “viral”. But Jesus didn’t live in such an age, there was no YouTube or other social media, people walked and talked without technological aid. One can only imagine what the outcome would have been if these events were taking place today? In verse 20 we are told that the multitude changed His

diet as they pressed so close that He could not raise His hand to take a bite of bread. Now there is a “popular” diet fad that would cause you to lose weight fast. Most if not all of humanity would have viewed such popularity and fame as symbols of success and used them to promote themselves into “*super star*” status. Jesus’ popularity has been noted by secular writers and artists as in the musical “*Jesus Christ Superstar*” but they miss the point. They only equate His success of drawing the multitudes from all around while failing to note how He dealt with it, which is the truer evidence of His deity.

Mark’s view is through Jesus’ reaction to popularity which is that: Human fame is fleeting, empty and hollow. It is a danger to His calling and limits His earthly ministry. Jesus knew, what mankind has still failed to grasp that, “*success generated popularity*” even when that success is generated because it is beneficial to others **KNOWS NO BOUNDS!** The trouble with popularity and success is that there are no clear lines drawn among those who make a person or an item popular. *In any multitude you have mixed together, not only those of curiosity but those with wrong affection and ulterior motives. Though they are all counted as making something or someone popular or successful, their numbers don’t indicate the truth.* Jesus attracted people irresistibly and among those He attracted a large majority were not there for the right reasons. Some came to hear His words but far more came to experience His works in hopes they would share in the benefits He so lavishly bestowed upon the people. *Such popularity is like the elements of weather; the right amount of it can be rather pleasant for a time but just a few degrees one way or the other or too little of this or too much of that can be disastrous.*

III. Vs. 9-10 Unwanted sales

Vs. 9-10 The two illustrations Mark puts forward in the next four verses all have the focus on the negative impact Jesus' popularity had upon others. In the end these two illustrations remind us that such popularity is not only **directionless** it also has **no ability to filter who it attracts and why they are attracted.**

- a. **Unwanted Sales:** After disclosing Jesus' demand that a small boat be placed nearby and kept ready because of His' "***crushing success***"; Mark informs the reader what had caused such success was "*He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him.*" There was no **politeness** or **patience** with the crowd as the word "*crush*" is used in classic Greek to describe **the crushing of grapes to extract the juice.** That word combined with the words "*pressed about Him*" indicate a **dangerous and desperate situation** as the word pressed means to "*fall against violently*". The scene was not only of **squeezing** Him it was violently **smashing** into Him all to get a touch to be healed. **The great multitude saw Jesus as a mere commodity** that they had to have and didn't care if they violently took it or not. **The scene no doubt looked more like an out of control crowd that was looting store fronts then people in search of the living God.** There with a **misplaced emphases** as **they emphasized the temporary at the expense of the permanent.** Jesus didn't come to just heal the body but the soul and spirit of man. The healing of the body was to demonstrate what He could do for the spirit. **They all wanted healing and He wanted to preach the word!** ***What this reveals is that popularity and success have no directional ability in human hearts. In fact inevitably popularity and success misdirect and distort the***

message as that which is secondary becomes the priority. There are far too many folks with a “*misplaced emphases*” concerning Jesus and they are perfectly happy to have Him be their Savior but have no interest in Him being their Lord. They will press about Him in time of need to touch Him but as soon as they have what they want they go merrily back to their life, without so much as a visit.

IV. Vs. 11-12 Unwanted advertisement

Vs. 11 In the text we see the 2nd illustration in the unclean spirits *examination* and *proclamation* concerning Jesus identity. The Greek reveals things that are unfortunately lost in the English translations.

1. *Examination*: The word “*saw*” describes an inspection of a commanding officer viewing his troops. Such viewing was critical in nature and through in investigation. These demons exhibited far more interest in Jesus and His true identity than had the thronging multitudes. They recognized Him as the Son of God out of whose presence they had been driven with Lucifer from heaven, falling to earth. The words “*fell down*” are in the imperfect tense which indicates a repeated action. All of this makes for a very vivid picture of long staring demonic eye contact with a throwing down in front of Jesus of the demon possessed person. All of which was being done periodically as one by one each of these demon possessed people had contact with Jesus.
 2. *Proclamation*: Again the Greek words for “*cried out*” are in the imperfect tense which indicate a continuous action as they kept on crying out in a horrible demonic voice. The Greek construction of this sentence would render it different than what we read in our English text as literally these demons said, “*As for you, you are the Son of God.*” It is clear that these demons recognized the deity of Jesus and the uniqueness of His relationship with the Father but this was not a testimony or an indorsement. The repeated howling acknowledgment, though true, was meant to offer confusion to the multitudes as their leader is the author of confusion.
- b. **Unwanted Advertisement**: Mark brings forth the revealing of Jesus true identity from sources known for telling lies. It is a safe bet that these “*unclean spirits*” had no desire to advance and promote the cause of Christ by their witness. They told the truth because they knew that in so doing they would hurt the cause of Jesus,

not help it. They were out to mislead people about the person and work of Jesus even though what they said was true. The fact that they were known as “*lying spirits*” would cause people to believe that what they were saying concerning Jesus was a sure proof that what they said wasn’t true. Mark Twain in his book called “*Roughing It*” tells a story of a notorious liar who had reached such a place in his tall tales that no one believed him about anything. One day they found him hanging with a suicide note pinned on him with the reasons why he took his own life. Though it was written in his own hand the authorities concluded the cause of his death was murder saying that if this man said he hung himself it was proof he hadn’t. Furthermore with this acknowledgement by demonic beings and indirectly satan, people would associate Jesus with the devil. Based upon Matthew 12:24 and the words of the Pharisees this lie of affiliation at least worked in part as the Pharisees had concluded that Jesus was casting out demons by allegiance with the devil.

Vs. 12 We finish this section off with Jesus rebuke of the demons testimony as to His true identity. The words “*sternly warn*” do not carry the severity of this rebuke by Jesus as the words in Greek are more of a threat of penalty. Jesus had no interest in the PR concerning His deity from demons, he was not interested in their advertising on His behalf.

When examining Jesus desire to “withdraw” from success and popularity it becomes apparent that such success and popularity in the world is not a good thing anymore than getting behind the wheel of a Lamborghini and racing off only to find out that not only does the steering not work neither do the breaks and the gas pedal.