



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

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"Lunatic, Liar or Lord" - Hope Restored Sermon Series

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Good morning! I'm Chris Pan and am on staff at the church as Executive Director.

We continue today in our sermon series, "Hope Restored", where we are walking passage by passage through the Gospel of Mark. We are spending lots of time with Jesus.

Our sermon title today is "Lunatic, Liar or Lord." We're going to talk about these three ways of viewing and approaching Jesus: Jesus as a lunatic, as a demon-possessed liar, or as Lord.

We pick up our passage today in the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 3, verses 20 to 28. As we go through our passage and our sermon today, ask yourself these two questions: "What is God saying to me?" "What does He want me to do about it?"

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If you are able, will you please stand for the reading of the Gospel of Mark?

Mark 3:20-28: *Then [Jesus] went home; 20 and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. 21 When His family heard it, they went out to restrain Him, for they were saying, "He has gone out of His mind."*

22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons He casts out demons." 23 And He called them to them, and spoke to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. 27 But 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."

This is the Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Please be seated and please join me in prayer. "Lord Jesus, may we see You clearly and hear You clearly now. May we draw close to You. May You be Lord to us. In Your powerful name we pray, and all God's people say: Amen."

One of my best friends from high school is this guy, whom I'll call Noah because...his name is Noah. Noah is a smart guy. I love him. He's an engineer. But every so often growing up, Noah would say crazy stuff. At one point, we were dressed up for some fancy event and I and I noticed that he

was wearing black pants and black shoes, but white socks.

So I said, "Hey, I think you should wear black socks with black pants and black shoes. It'll look better."

And Noah says, "Nah, the black ink from those socks will leak into your blood stream and will eventually kill you." I didn't know if he was serious, so I say, "No, no...I don't think so." But he was serious, so he only wore white socks.

Another time, he's over my house, and we're having fish for dinner. And he says, "No I don't eat fish." So I was like, "Why not? Since when? You eat meat!"

And Noah says, "I just think it's unfair. I don't like how people are tricking the fish. You put a worm on a hook, and the fish is thinking, Ah sweet, free worm! And the fish swims over, and next thing the fish knows, it's got a hook in its face and your eating him. When you eat a steak, you know, the cow can see you coming, and it can run away. But a fish, it's underwater, and he's just getting tricked. I don't like it. I don't eat fish."

And I'm like, "I...I don't think that's how it works." And Noah says, "I don't eat fish."

I've got this aunt, whom I love and who loves me, who always forwards me emails, warning me about terrible, tragic things that really aren't actually happening. She sent an email that said, "When you are driving at night, and another car is driving towards you with their high beams on, DON'T flash your high beams back at them, because it's actually a gang initiation ritual, and they'll turn around and kill you."

And I'd email back, and say, you know, there's a website, Snopes.com, where you can check this and that's not actually happening. And my aunt would email me back and say, "No, it is happening. You have a cousin in Florida named Peewee, and his neighbor got killed like that. I talked to Peewee's mom."

I don't even have a cousin named Peewee!

I got another email from my aunt and it said: "Don't go to the movie theater. Because they are people who are taking long needles, and filling it with AIDS and then they'll sit behind and you stick you through the back of your seat, and then say, 'Ha ha! You got AIDS!'"

In case you are worried, I have researched this, and there have been zero confirmed instances of AIDS being contracted in this manner.

Maybe you have an aunt like this. Maybe you ARE an aunt like this. I love my aunt. And I know that she loves me—that's why she's warning me! She doesn't want me to die in a gang initiation ritual, or from movie theater AIDS.

But at a certain point, I say to myself, "I know you love me, but I'm just going to ignore what

you're saying, because it's just a little crazy."

A brief, serious disclaimer: I will say "crazy" a lot in this sermon as informal shorthand and slang. And by doing so, in no way do I mean to diminish or make light of mental illness. Mental health is something this church takes very seriously. So seriously, in fact that this church and Hawaiian Islands Ministries will be hosting a Mental Health conference here in September featuring Kay Warren, Rick Warren's wife. End of disclaimer.

Back to our passage: Mark Chapter 3, verse 20 and 21: *Then [Jesus] went home; 20 and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. When Jesus' family heard it, they went out to restrain Jesus, for they were saying, "He has gone out of His mind."*

Jesus is back in Capernaum, where He has been teaching, and casting out demons from people, healing a paralyzed man lowered through the ceiling, and then healing a man with a withered hand, challenging the religious leaders about the Sabbath.

And Jesus' family shows up and they want to stop Jesus. And they aren't just walking over a few streets. Remember, He's Jesus of...Nazareth.

Take a look at that map! His family has come from Nazareth, a 25-mile journey from Capernaum.

They come all this way to restrain him. Other translations say, "to seize Him, to take custody of Him", "to take charge of Him." They make the long trip to tell Jesus, "You got to cut it out. You're

being crazy. You're embarrassing us."

His family comes 25 miles to say to Him: "You are a carpenter from Nazareth. You know what sane people aspire to, Jesus? Safety, security, the good opinion of society. These are the important, sane things. Why did You leave a stable, nice-paying job at our family business? It's comfortable. Why are You jeopardizing Your safety and security by picking fights with the religious leaders? Why are You taking these risks? Why are You hanging out with this questionable crowd? A tax collector, fishermen, a fanatical nationalist extremist? A leper? THAT woman over there, do You know what *her* profession is? This is not a respectable crowd. And You're saying crazy stuff, like You're going to fish for people, and that You're the Lord of the Sabbath, and that You can forgive sins! That's just crazy talk—You've gotta stop, and come back to Nazareth."

Jesus' family doesn't actually say that to Jesus, you know. They say that to us. They say safety, security, the opinion of society—those are the important things, right? Non-risky, inoffensive, good moral teaching, that's okay. But when you start making decisions that affect your security and safety and the opinion of society, when you start taking about worshipping the LORD, and the forgiveness of sins, and reaching the margins of society that's crazy talk.

In reality, Jesus' family doesn't actually say that to Jesus, because...before they can actually get to Jesus, the scribes, or religious leaders, beat them to Jesus.

We find in the very next verse, verse 22, the following words.

And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons."

Before His family can show up and say, "Jesus, You're crazy," The scribes show up and say, "Jesus, You're possessed by the devil." Because the scribes think, how else could You have the power to exorcise these demons? What other explanation could there be for this power, except that You are demon-possessed.

The scribes have come from Jerusalem to confront Jesus. Jerusalem is over 100 miles away. Take a look at that map! These are not casual, we-just-bumped into You at the synagogue, conversations. Jesus' family on this side saying, "We think You are crazy." The religious leaders on this side saying, "WE think You are possessed by the devil."

If this were a movie, this is where the stakes in the movie of Mark just stepped up a level. The tension is accelerating.

Jesus responds to the scribes saying, "How can Satan cast out Satan?"

24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. 27 But 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.

In my movie version of the book of Mark, challenges are coming and Jesus isn't wispy and

thin played by Jim Caviezel. Pastor Steve preached about Jesus confronting the Pharisees a few weeks ago, healing on the Sabbath, and he pictured Jesus picking a fight, being like Robert DeNiro, "You talkin' to me?"

In my movie, I think Jesus, for this encounter with the scribes, should be played by...the Rock, Dwayne Johnson.

Jesus would raise His one eyebrow at the scribes and say, "How can Satan cast out Satan? That doesn't make sense at all. A country or family isn't going to fight against itself. That's just bad tactics."

"Satan is like a tyrant, a strong man. But I'm even stronger. And I'm going to walk into the strong man's house, in broad daylight, tie him up, and take all his stuff."

And then Jesus flexes His biceps. That's how I picture it. Maybe you picture it differently.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus describes Himself with seven "I Am" statements, that establish His divinity and His character. Jesus says: "I Am the bread of life. I am the light of the world. I Am the gate for the sheep. I Am the good shepherd. I Am the resurrection and the life. I Am the way, the truth and the life. I Am the true vine."

I love this passage in Mark, because I want it to be the unofficial eighth I am statement of Jesus: "I am a BAD man. I am a BAAAAD man. I am going to go into Satan's house and take his possessions."

I am going to go into Satan's house and take his possessions.

What possessions is Jesus taking? It's us. He's rescuing us.

There's a book in the Old Testament of the Bible, written by the prophet Isaiah, 700 years before Jesus. A central theme is the return and restoration of the people of Israel, from exile and captivity in Babylon.

Isaiah writes about the people of God, as captives of a mighty tyrant, and their rescuer.

Isaiah 49:24-26: 24 Can the prey be taken from the mighty, or the captives of a tyrant be rescued? 25 But thus says the Lord: Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken, and the prey of the tyrant be rescued; for I will contend with those who contend with you, and I will save your children.

26 Then all flesh shall know that I am the Lord your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

Can you hear and see God flexing His muscles? For us? To rescue and redeem us!

Jesus' family comes and thinks Jesus is crazy, that He's a lunatic. The scribes come and say that He's a demon-possessed liar. Jesus says, "I'm not a lunatic. I'm not a demon-possessed liar. I am the LORD.

"I am God in the flesh. I have the power to forgive sins, to heal, I am the Lord of the Sabbath. I am going to rescue Satan's captives, just like the people of Israel were rescued from Babylon, because I am stronger than Satan and I am victorious over Satan. Satan's reign of sin and death are over, and God's reign, and God's kingdom have already begun."

The author C.S. Lewis, writes in the book *Mere Christianity*, about the choice we have when we meet Jesus. C.S. Lewis gives us this choice: Jesus is a Lunatic, Jesus is a Demon-possessed Liar, or Jesus is Lord and God.

CS Lewis writes: "I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about [Jesus]: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher.

"He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon OR you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. . . . Now, it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic, nor a fiend: and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that Jesus was and is God. (*Mere Christianity*, 55-56)"

And so, we are faced with the choice. Do we think Jesus is a lunatic? Do we think He is a demon-possessed liar? Or do we fall at His feet and worship Him as Lord and God?

I choose to fall at His feet, and call Him Lord and God. I hope you will join me.

That's nice and tidy, and we could end the sermon right here. We all worship Jesus as Lord! Problem solved.

But, if I'm really honest, I really have to look harder at this passage and search deeper into my own heart. Because the people who called Jesus crazy were Jesus' family and the ones who called Him demon-possessed were the religious people. And I remember that we today are now Jesus' family, and we are the religious people. And I think, do I always call Jesus Lord, and recognize Him as LORD?

Or sometimes, do I treat Jesus like I think He is just a little crazy?

Do I treat Jesus as though He was maybe not a full-on lunatic, but like my aunt and my friend Noah—someone who is just a little crazy and who doesn't really know what He's saying.

Do I say to Jesus: "I know You love me, but, I'm just going to ignore what You're saying, because it's just a little crazy."

In the Sermon on the Mount, recorded in the gospel of Matthew, Jesus says in Matthew 5:44, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

Yeah, Jesus, I know You're Lord, but that's just a little crazy. I'm going to ignore that one. I'm not really going to pray for racists, or chauvinists, or bullies in school and in politics. We're not really supposed to love religious jihadists or drug dealers or THAT Democratic senator or THAT Republican cabinet member. I'm not REALLY supposed to love them, just like the dye from wearing black socks isn't REALLY

going leak into my bloodstream and kill me. Come Jesus, you're being crazy.

In Matthew 6:14, Jesus says: *For if you forgive others their sins, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your sins.*

Come on, Jesus! I know You love me, but, I'm just going to ignore what You're saying, because it's just crazy. I don't really have to forgive other people, or God won't forgive me. Those jerks have done some terrible things to me. That person says terrible things about me behind my back. That person parks their fancy car across TWO parking stalls. I think: I don't REALLY have to forgive others, just like gangs aren't REALLY shooting people who flash their high beams.

There are other things that Jesus says that we ignore because we treat Jesus like He's a lunatic, instead of the LORD—all from the gospel of Matthew.

Matthew 7:1: "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged."

Matthew 5:42: "Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you."

Matthew 6:34: "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own."

Matthew 7:12: "In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you."

Matthew 16:24: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me."

25 *For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for My sake will find it."*

Come on Jesus, that's crazy talk. I know You love me, but I'm just going to ignore what you are saying because these are crazy things, and You don't really expect me to live like that, right? I'm going to just ignore these sayings, and treat them like You said don't eat fish 'cause they're getting tricked, or watch out for movie theater AIDS.

I know we call You Lord, Jesus, but really, we'll treat You like a lunatic.

There's an organization called Red Letter Christians, founded by Tony Campolo. And they want to bring Christians back to taking seriously the words of Jesus, which are often printed in Bibles in red letters. And really, taking Jesus as Lord seriously. Because you know, there are MANY MORE statements that could have gone on those slides.

I think Red Letter Christians understand something, which is that if we Christians really take the Red letters of the Bible seriously, take Jesus seriously, we would look very different.

Because here's the great irony: If we take Jesus seriously and worship Him as Lord and don't treat Him like a lunatic, we Christians will end up living and looking a little crazy ourselves to a world in desperate need for Christ's love and forgiveness, and mercy and justice.

All throughout the Bible, people who followed God were considered crazy: John the Baptist, the apostle Paul, like every single prophet.

When we really believe, and live out the reality that Jesus is Lord of our lives, we might look a little crazy to a world that doesn't recognize Jesus, and there may be real consequences. But I think our world needs more crazy Christians.

The author Jack Hitt told a story once, that I found so poignant and powerful. To my knowledge, I don't think Jack is a Christian.

Jack tells this story about his daughter, who was four years old at the time. And it's around Christmas-time, and she asks what the holiday means. So Jack explains that it's the celebration of the birth of Jesus. And she wants to know more, so Jack goes and buys a kid's Bible and they read it every night. She loves it and wants to know everything about Jesus. So they read about His birth and His teaching, and she would ask constantly what "that phrase" was. And Jack would explain to her that it was, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." And they would talk about those old words and what that all meant.

Then one day, Jack and his daughter were driving past a big church, and out front was an enormous cross with a statue of a man's body hanging on it. She says, "Who is that?" And Jack realizes, oh yeah, I guess I'd never really told her that part of the story. So Jack says, "Oh, well, that's Jesus. And I forgot to tell you what else happened. He got in trouble with the Roman government. His message was so radical and unnerving to the existing authorities of the time that they killed Him. They came to the conclusion that He had to die

because His message was too troublesome."

Christmas passes, and it's mid-January. And the daughter's preschool has Martin Luther King Day, Jr. Day off, so Jack takes his daughter out to lunch. And on the table was the Arts section of the local newspaper, with a big drawing of MLK by a ten-year-old kid on the cover.

So the daughter asks, "Who's that?" And Jack says, "Well, that's Martin Luther King, Jr. He's the reason you're not in school today. Today is his birthday so we celebrate his life."

And she ask, "So who was he?" And Jack says, "Well, he was a preacher."

And she looks up at Jack and goes, "For Jesus?" And Jack said, "Yeah, actually, he was. But what he was really famous for, was he had a message."

And Jack is thinking about how to explain this to a four year old, hearing everything for the first time. So he's very careful about how he phrases everything and he says, "Well, yeah, he was a preacher and he had a message. He said that you should treat everybody the same no matter what they look like."

And the daughter thinks about that for a minute, and then she says, "Well, that's what Jesus said."

And Jack says, "Yeah, I guess it is. I never thought of it that way, but that is sort of like, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

And his daughter thinks for a minute and then looks up and says, "Did they kill him, too?"

Matt 16:24: *"If you want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.25 "For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for Jesus sake will find it."*

Our invitation, when we call Jesus Lord, is an invitation to take up our cross and follow Jesus.

I'm on the mailing list for Red Letter Christians, and a few months ago I got an email. It highlighted the amazing and tumultuous times we are living through: Me Too, Times Up, Black Lives Matter, Never Again.

The email read: One of our elders from the Civil Rights movement told me, "If you wonder what you would have done if you were alive in the 60s...just watch what you are doing now. That's what you would have been doing then." It was a reminder that even as people were marching, preaching and singing, and going to jail...other folks were watching it all on television or sleeping through the revolution."

Our world and our times are in desperate need of people who take seriously Jesus as Lord, to the point of being considered a little crazy.

Crazy enough to believe that God is real and that Jesus rose from the dead. Crazy enough to believe that the love of God is greater and stronger than all the powers of evil and death. Crazy enough to believe that all lives are sacred and have equal value and that no child in our world should have to go to bed hungry or be shot in the back. Crazy enough to take up a cross. Crazy enough to listen to and value the voices and testimony of women, and young people and minorities

and others who have long been on the margins of society. Crazy enough to believe that Satan can't drive out Satan, cruelty can't drive out cruelty, violence can't drive out violence, lies won't drive out lies, that immoral means can't be used to accomplish moral ends. Crazy enough to believe that only Love and Truth, and Faith, and Hope prevail. Crazy enough to call a homeless, Middle-eastern carpenter/rabbi LORD of our lives. Crazy enough to pray for and work for the kingdom of God to reign on earth, as it is in heaven.

One final verse, to encourage you as we end because our sermon series is Hope Restored. And we are on the other side of Easter. And the story doesn't end with Jesus hanging on a cross, or buried in a tomb. Jesus is Risen! And He is coming again. And MLK and all the saints who declared Jesus Lord and took Him seriously are in His presence right now! So here is a passage from the book of Revelation, about our future. About Jesus, our Lord, and His power over Satan, and our inevitable triumph in God's kingdom.

Revelation 20: *Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in His hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. ² He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, ³ and threw him into the pit, and locked and sealed it over him, so that he would deceive the nations no more...*

⁴ Then I saw thrones, and those seated on them were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God... They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Amen? Amen!

What is God saying to you now? What does He want you to do about it?

Let's take a moment now, in silent prayer and reflection before Jesus our Lord. Lord Jesus, speak to us now.

Jesus, we confess that we sometimes treat You like You're crazy. Forgive us. We declare and confess now that you are LORD. We believe in You. And all God's people say, Amen.

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Note: Sunday sermon texts are also available at fpchawaii.org The audio version can be downloaded from iTunes. You may also request the audio version by visiting: fpchkoolau@gmail.com