



[Pastor Steven Billings](#)

Sermon for Pentecost 2

June 6, 2021

Listen to Jesus

Mark 3:20-35

²⁰ Then [Jesus] went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. ²¹ And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, “He is out of his mind.”

²² And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “by the prince of demons he casts out the demons.” ²³ And he called them to him and said 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 is coming to an end. ²⁷ But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

²⁸ “Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, ²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” — ³⁰ for they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”

³¹ And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. ³² And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.” ³³ And he answered them, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” ³⁴ And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”

The more you talk, the less likely people are to remember what you say. If you tell someone half a dozen things, he might remember three or four, but if you tell him *one thing*, there's a fairly good chance he'll remember what you said.

St. Mark, the writer of today's Gospel, wants very much for you to know and to remember what God's will is for your life. He so wants you to know and remember this that he only wrote one thing about the will of God in his entire book. The other Gospel writers — Matthew, Luke, and John — record in their books many things Jesus said about God's will. It's almost as if Mark had said to himself, “I want people to remember what God's will is for their lives, so I'm not going to tell them six or eight or ten things about God's will; I'm going to write down *one thing* — *only one thing* — that Jesus said about the will of His



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Father.”

Today’s Gospel is that one thing that Mark wants you to know and to remember about God’s will. According to our text, God’s will for your life is that you listen to Jesus.

In this text Jesus had just returned to His home town of Nazareth and a large crowd had gathered around Him, listening to Him. When His family called to Him, someone said, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.” How did He respond? He said, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking at those who were sitting there listening to Him, He said, “Here are my mother and my brothers!” Then He adds, for your sake and mine, “Whoever does the will of God, *he* is my brother and sister and mother.”

How may we deduce from this God’s will for our lives? It goes like this:

- Jesus said that those who do the will of God are His brother and sister and mother.
- He also said that the people listening to Him were His mother and His brothers.
- Therefore, if you listen to Jesus, you’re doing the will of God.

Now, some people may want to argue and protest against what Mark has written here. The other Gospel writers might even want to straighten him out a bit!

You can almost hear Matthew say, “Wait a minute, Mark! You forgot to mention that God’s will also includes the setting aside of our human desires so that His desires may be accomplished among us” (cf. Matthew 6:10 and 26:42).

Luke might add, “Yes, Mark, but what about the *results* of listening to Jesus? Isn’t it also true that God’s will is that we ‘bear fruits in keeping with repentance,’ as John the Baptist preached?” (cf. Luke 3:8)

John the Evangelist might offer Mark a gentle corrective, too: “Yes, Mark, listening to Jesus is God’s will — but not merely listening! The will of God is also that we believe the Words Jesus speaks!” (cf. John 6:29)

And Mark wouldn’t disagree with any of this. But, you see, Mark knows that the more you talk, the less likely people are to remember what you say. So he writes down one thing among the many things that Jesus said about God’s will. According to Mark — according to today’s Gospel — God’s will for your life is this: Listen to Jesus.

In a larger sense, does God’s will include the setting aside of our human desires in favor of His desires? Absolutely! But maybe Mark decided to describe God’s will only as listening to Jesus — because he knows that the Words of Jesus will do great and miraculous things for you. Not only do they identify your sin and forgive your sin, they will also gently and lovingly bend your desires to conform with God’s desires. In other words, when you listen to Jesus, His Words will change and transform you!

And doesn’t God desire that we “bear fruits in keeping with repentance?” (cf. Luke



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3:8) Of course He does! But maybe Mark elected to describe God's will only as listening to Jesus — because Mark knows that dead branches bear no fruit! The Words of Jesus make you a living branch. They course life through your veins, producing the fruit of repentance. His words not only tell you what you must do, but they also accomplish your doing it. When you listen to Jesus, the fruits of repentance are closer to you than your heartbeat.

And isn't it God's will that we not merely listen to Jesus, but also believe the Words He speaks? (cf. John 6:29) Without question! But maybe Mark chose to describe God's will only as listening to Jesus — because he wants you to understand that faith appears out of nothing when the Words of Jesus are spoken, that faith miraculously results from listening to Jesus; faith is born from above by the power of Jesus' Words. When you listen to Jesus, Jesus pours faith into your ears and your mind and your heart!

The crowd that was sitting around Jesus said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking at those sitting there, He said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

There it is; that is the sum total of everything Mark records Jesus saying about the will of God for your life. He wants you to focus your attention on this one thought — not Mark's human thought, but our Lord's own divine Words — God's will for your life is that you listen to Jesus. Allow that one thing, beloved — that one solitary thing that Mark reported Jesus saying about the will of God — allow that one thing to burrow and root into your heart and mind. That one thing — listening to Jesus — that one thing will make your life immeasurably better.

How? Well, you'll never need to wonder about what God's will is for your life. His will couldn't be any simpler: Listen to Jesus. Everything else will flow from that: faith, good works, family, education, career, congregational life. Whether you're a butcher, baker, or candlestick maker; employed, unemployed, disabled, or retired; married or single; many children or childless; rich or poor; solitary or in the company of many: every aspect of God's will for your life boils down to listening to Jesus.

Today's Gospel will also help you answer a demonic lie that has captured and deceived so many fellow Christians — maybe even some of the Christians in your own family. Here's the lie: You don't need to go to church, or hear the Word, or receive the sacrament to be Christian. A lot of people fool themselves into thinking that you can ignore God's will and still be Christian. Today's Gospel will help you not become one of those people. For in it, God tells you that His will for you is that you listen to Jesus. Sounds pretty simple to me (Cf. Matthew 7:21-23)

Finally, the Words of Jesus are just plain comforting for you. People gathered together in today's Gospel because Jesus' Words helped them. His Words gave them



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assurance and forgiveness and life and peace — just as they do for you. God’s will for your life is that you listen to Jesus because God wants you to:

- have the forgiveness of sins that comes to you through Jesus’ Words, “Your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5);
- have the strength that Jesus’ Words give you to endure the elemental forces that oppose you in your life (e.g., Mark 1:39, 6:45-52);
- know and never doubt — not even for a moment — that you are truly part of Jesus’ family, no matter how orphaned you might feel. The will of God is that you listen to Jesus. And to this He adds, for your sake and for mine, “*Whoever* does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”

In the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen