We Need More Crazy Christians
Sermon Delivered on June 7, 2015
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Sermon Text: Mark 3:20-35

(Significant illustrations for this sermon were adapted from a sermon by Michael B. Curry entitled “We Need Some Crazy Christians” http://www.faithandleadership.com/sermons/michael-b-curry-we-need-some-crazy-christians and a sermon by William G. Carter entitled “Looking a Little Bit Crazy” esermons.com)

A photocopied sign was posted inside a church office. It was one of those humorous full-page slogans that people in different offices duplicate and pass among themselves. Most of us have seen this particular message, I suppose, but posted in a church office, the words took on a new meaning. There it was, taped to the cinder blocks behind a secretary's desk. The sign read, "You don't have to be crazy to work here, but it helps."

At one level, why not put a sign like that in a church? Many churches are busy, hectic, confusing places. There are worship services to plan, educational programs to run, praise teams to rehearse, fundraisers to develop, fellowship dinners to organize, outreach efforts to facilitate, and people coming in for assistance. There is a lot going on, and at times things can get rather frantic. The running joke between Janie and I is: “maybe tomorrow it will be quiet or maybe next week things will calm down.” But the quiet day never comes and the calm week only exists in our imaginations. So sometimes it helps to be a little crazy when you either work in or are in ministry at the church.

On a deeper level, there is a great deal of truth to that sign. There is truly something different about the church and the people in it. We are not just another club or civic organization. These days the church's view of reality is increasingly out of sync with many of the prevailing cultural norms. In the church, we do and say things that do not always make sense to people outside of these four walls. For instance, here we are, gathered on the weekend, sitting on hard pews singing praises and saying prayers while people we know are outside, working on their tans, mowing their lawns or washing their cars. As a lot of other people are planning a barbecue or sipping a Bloody Mary, we come together on a morning like this to break the bread and drink the cup. To some outsiders, this must look a little bit crazy. But according to the scripture text we read a few minutes ago, maybe we Christians are supposed to be different. Maybe we are supposed to be doing things
that make other people wonder if we have a few screws rolling around loose up here.

In our text Mark tells us about the day when Jesus’ family came to do an intervention and take him away for his own good. The word on the street was that Jesus was "out of his mind." Some even thought he was possessed. And so, his family came to intervene and save him from himself. One of my favorite interpretations says, “When Jesus’ family heard what he was doing, they thought he was crazy and went to get him under control.” So forgive me for saying it this way, but Jesus was, and is crazy!

And, my friends, those who would follow him, those who would be his disciples, are called to be just as crazy as Jesus. And I truly believe that what the world needs now is not just love, sweet, love, but more crazy Christians.

But I also don’t want to be too quick to judge Jesus’ mother and the rest of his family. They had good reason to be concerned. Recall some of the stories Mark tells. One day, Jesus met the town lunatic in Capernaum, and he sets him free of his demons. Immediately Jesus goes to Peter’s mother-in-law’s house and finds her bedridden with a fever. He sets her free from her illness and she begins to serve them. Then Jesus met someone with leprosy who is quarantined in a lonely place away from his friends and family. Jesus healed that person’s disease and set him free from isolation. So according to Mark, Jesus did not accept the world as a place of sickness, sin, and evil. He acted as if God had begun doing something new and that he was part of it. And that's why some people said, "He has gone out of his mind. He’s crazy."

But I am here to tell you I believe in today’s world we need some Christians who are as crazy as the Lord. Crazy enough to love like Jesus, to give like Jesus, to forgive like Jesus – crazy enough to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God – just like Jesus. Crazy enough to dare to change the world from the nightmare it often is into something close to the dream that God dreams for it. And so for those who would follow him, for those who would be his disciples, it might come as a shock, but you are called to craziness.
A prime example of someone who heard this call to craziness was a woman named Harriet Beecher Stowe. If that name sounds familiar to you it is because she is the woman who wrote a little book entitled “Uncle Tom’s Cabin.”

Harriet Beecher was born in 1811 into a devout family committed to living the gospel of Jesus and to helping transform the world from the nightmare it often is into the dream God intends. In her little book of fiction this woman told the truth. She told the story of how slavery afflicted a family. She told the truth of the brutality, the injustice, the inhumanity of the institution of slavery. Her book did what YouTube videos of injustices and brutalities do today. It went 19th-century viral. It rallied abolitionists and enraged most of the South. The influence of that book was so powerful that Abraham Lincoln is reported to have said upon meeting Harriet Beecher Stowe for the first time, “So you’re the little lady who started this great war!”

But to understand how crazy this was you need to know that a woman of Stowe’s era was supposed to write nice stories, not stories that would disturb the conscience of a nation. She was supposed to marry well, raise well-bred children, participate in a few charitable activities and be fondly remembered by all who knew her. That was the life she was supposed to live. But she had been raised in a family that believed that following Jesus meant making a difference. And sometimes that means marching to the beat of a different drummer. Sometimes that means caring when it is tempting to care less, or standing up when others sit down or speaking up when others stay passively silent. Sometimes making a difference means we have to be a little crazy.

When Steve Jobs, one of the founders of Apple Inc., died a couple of years ago, an old Apple commercial from the 90s went viral on YouTube. Its purpose was to re-brand Apple products. The tag line for the commercial and the company at that time was: “Think different,” a phrase that is grammatically incorrect, but makes the point.

The commercial showed a collage of photographs and film footage of people who have invented and inspired, created and sacrificed to improve the world – in other words, they made a difference. It showed images of people like Bob Dylan, Amelia Earhart, Frank Lloyd Wright, Maria Callas, Muhammad Ali, Martin Luther King Jr., Jim Henson, Albert Einstein, Pablo Picasso, Mahatma Gandhi and on and on and on.
As the images rolled by, a voice read this poem:

Here’s to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently.

They’re not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can’t do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward.

While some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.

My friends, we need some crazy Christians. Why? Because sane, sanitized Christianity is killing the church and letting the world become a place where everyone does what is right in their own eyes rather than becoming the dream God dreams for it. Sane Christianity may have worked once upon a time, but it won’t carry the gospel anymore. So we need some crazy Christians. We need some crazy Christians like Harriet Beecher Stowe, a genteel woman who was crazy enough to write a book exposing the brutality and injustice of slavery. We need more crazy Christians like physician Albert Schweitzer who, instead of establishing a medical practice to get rich, established medical missions in Africa for people without basic health care service. We need Christians like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a theologian and pastor, who was crazy enough to stand up to Hitler and the Third Reich even though it cost him his life. We need some crazy Christians like Martin Luther King, Jr. who insisted that more violence was not the way to address violence or inequality or injustice. We need more crazy Christians like Mother Teresa who saw Jesus in every person she found dying in the gutters of Calcutta, so she took them out, cleaned them up and help them die with dignity.

Yes, we need more crazy Christians - Christians crazy enough to believe that God is real and that Jesus lives. Crazy enough to follow the radical way of the gospel. Crazy enough to believe that the love of God is greater than all the powers of evil and death.

We need some Christians crazy enough to believe that the world
doesn’t have to be the way it often seems to be; that children don’t have to go to bed hungry; that the homeless have just as much sacred worth as the wealthy because every human being is created in the image of God; that the elderly are to be honored, not cheated, neglected or forgotten.

We need more crazy Christians who follow Jesus’ lead, because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do. Amen.

Those Crazy Christians by Brad Paisley (link to Youtube video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-wGPxSwqIl8)

Those crazy Christians, I was gonna sleep in today
But the church bells woke me up and they’re a half a mile away
Those crazy Christians, dressed up drivin’ down my street
Get their weekly dose of guilt before they head to Applebee’s

They pray before they eat and they pray before they snore
They pray before a football game and every time they score
Every untimely passing, every dear departed soul
Is just another good excuse to bake a casserole

Those crazy Christians, go and jump on some airplane
And fly to Africa or Haiti, risk their lives in Jesus’ name
No, they ain’t the late night party kind
They curse the devil’s whiskey while they drink the Savior’s wine

A famous TV preacher has a big affair and then
One tearful confession and he’s born again again
Someone yells hallelujah and they shout and clap and sing
It’s like they can’t wait to forgive someone for just about anything
Those crazy Christians

Instead of being outside on this sunny afternoon
They’re by the bedside of a stranger in a cold hospital room
And every now and then they meet a poor lost soul like me
Who’s not quite sure just who or what or how he ought to be
They march him down the aisle and then the next thing that you know
They dunk him in the water and here comes another one of those crazy Christians
They look to heaven their whole life
And I think what if they’re wrong but what if they’re right
You know it’s funny, much as I’m baffled by it all
If I ever really needed help, well you know who I’d call
Is those crazy Christians