

Mark 3:20-35 "A New Family" 6/9/24

My father had two sisters and a brother - They had a rich tradition of having family reunions - As a child, I can remember traveling to reunions in Atchinson, Kansas, Michigan City, Indiana, Jamestown, Virginia, and Washington DC

We would all gather at one of the four families' homes - My family and Uncle Bill's family both had only one son - My father's sisters both had multiple children - Despite the size of the group, we'd all stay in the same house for about a week

My mother's side of the family had the beach house tradition - On that side of my family, my grandmother had three daughters, two sons-in-law and four grandsons - They would split the cost of renting a beach house in Manasquan for both July and August, where we'd all gather

We rented the same house year after year - And before you imagine my family having a few billionaires, our beach house, in the 1950s & 60s, was just \$100 per week - \$900 or so for the whole summer - By comparison, Joanne and I have reserved a single hotel room in Cape May for my soon to be enjoyed July vacation - Those three nights will be \$894

Yet, while the big gatherings in my past are no longer economically practical - Family remains very important - Which hopefully is the case in your family too - It certainly was in Jesus' family

Our Gospel passage comes from a time near the beginning of Jesus' ministry - Word about Him had already spread far and wide - People were healed - And Jesus taught with authority

Mark 3:7-10 gives a little glimpse of this time when the crowds were beginning to get overwhelming - Those verses say, "Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon.

When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him. And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him, for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him.”¹

For Jesus to have needed to risk being crushed by the crowds, speaks of a lot of people - When word of this reached His family, they were understandably very worried - And as today’s Gospel passage begins, we read of Jesus’ family acting on those concerns

Mark 3:20-21 “Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, “He is out of his mind.”

With the crowds pressing in on him, Jesus didn’t even have time to eat - He was healing many, but even with all the good that He was accomplishing, things like eating and resting remained very important

Because of this, His friends and family came to take charge thinking He had gone “over the edge” as a religious fanatic - They were concerned for him, but they missed the point of his ministry - Even those who were closest to Jesus were slow to understand who He was and what He had come to do

Mark 3:31-32 “And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.”

Mark 6:3 describes Jesus as the “son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon” - That verse also mentions one of more sisters, but doesn’t mention their names - There is some controversy surrounding who these brothers and sisters were

¹ Scripture quoted has been taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version,

We know that Jesus' mother was Mary - She was a rather important person in Jesus' birth, and is recorded in Matthew and Luke in the Christmas narrative - The controversy is how the brothers and sisters were related

Most feel that these were other children that Mary and Joseph had after Jesus was born - My Life Application Bible notes that, "some Christians believe the ancient tradition that Jesus was Mary's only child - If this is true, the "brothers" were possibly cousins

Some have offered yet another suggestion: When Joseph married Mary, he was a widower, and these were his children by his first marriage"² - Yet the most likely explanation is that Mary and Joseph were a normal young married couple living in the days before birth control was invented, and therefore they had many children

Family relations can get complicated at times - A few years ago, 76-year-old Bill Baker of London married Edna Harvey - This made their families very complicated because Edna happened to be Bill's granddaughter's husband's mother

That's where the confusion began, according to Baker's granddaughter, Lynn - She noted that, "My mother-in-law is now my step-grandmother. My grandfather is now my stepfather. My mom is my sister-in-law, and my brother is my nephew. But even crazier, is that I'm now married to my uncle and my own children are my cousins."³

So, Jesus' siblings arrive with His mother Mary to rescue Jesus from what they perceive as Jesus making some bad choices and letting the crowds overwhelm Him

Verse 21 notes that, His family went out to seize Him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind" - This had to be Jesus' brothers saying that - Because, from the moment Jesus' earthly life began in Mary's womb, she knew exactly who He was

² Life Application Bible, © 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 2012 (Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, IL)

³ SermonCentral.com

His family arrives and someone interrupts Jesus, who was teaching to the crowd seated around Him - And verse 33 records, "And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?"

Jesus' question was not born out of ignorance, since He obviously knew who His mother and His brothers were - Nor did He intend any disrespect toward His family, whom He clearly loved

Jesus simply used this real-life interruption to teach a spiritual truth to His followers who were gathered around Him - And thanks to Mark's Gospel, we are among those followers gathered around Him

Mark records that Jesus answered His own question - Mark 3:33-34 say, "And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

The Lord's point was that the only relationship to Him that matters eternally is not physical, but spiritual - His spiritual family is comprised of those who have a saving relationship with Him through faith - As He had explained to Nicodemus, it is not our earthly birth that makes us part of the family of God, but our spiritual rebirth, that of being born again

Unlike the scribes and Pharisees, who are recorded in verses 22 through 30 blaspheming the Holy Spirit by rejecting the Son of God, genuine disciples are careful to do the will of God by honoring Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior

On another occasion in Judea, when a woman exclaimed to Jesus, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!" - He responded likewise, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"⁴

Those who truly recognize that Jesus is their Lord always respond with an eagerness to obey Him

⁴ from Luke 11:27-28

True conversion is always marked by obedience to the Word of God and submission to the authority of Christ

As Jesus explained in John 8:31-32, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." - A few chapters later, in John 14:15 He echoed that same truth: Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandment"

John MacArthur writes that, "Embracing the lordship of Jesus Christ is more than mere lip service. It is the essence of the Christian life and a sure characteristic of those who are part of the family of God"⁵

Our Lord was not suggesting that believers ignore or abandon their families to serve God, but only that we put God's will above everything else in life - It is God's will that we care for the families the Lord has given us

1 Timothy 5:8 "But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" - However, we must not permit even our dearest loved ones to influence us away from the will of God

In conclusion, we may not have anything to do with what family we are born into - But we have everything to do with the choice to be born again - Accept God's free gift of salvation and you'll discover lots of new brothers and sisters in Christ

Do you know the ABCs of salvation? - A is for admit that you are a sinner and there is nothing any of us can do to change any of those sins in our past - B is for believe - We believe that Jesus died on the cross for our forgiveness - And rose from the dead to assure us of eternal life

C can be for confess or call - We are to confess our need for a Savior to cleanse us of our sins, and call upon Jesus to do just that - At that moment, we are saved from our sins, and incorporated into the family of God - Finally we are to respond to God's gift of salvation by living in obedience to God's Word, doing what Jesus wants us to do

⁵ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, © 2015 by John MacArthur, (Moody Publishers, Chicago, Illinois)