

The Family of God

Mark 3:20-21, 31-35

- After a couple weeks off, we are picking back up where we left off in the book of Mark.
- Thus far in our study, we have seen Jesus going around teaching, preaching, and healing.
- He has cast out demons and done some amazing miracles already.
- However, as he has been working, people haven't liked what he was teaching and doing.
- Jesus was challenging their authority and their way of looking at the Bible, and they didn't like it, so they have fought him at every turn.
- The religious leaders have been mad about who he was spending time with, when he chose to heal, and even by whose authority he was working.

- We wrap up this section of Mark with another conflict.
- This time, it hits a lot closer to home.
- If you go back up to **Mark 20-21**, we see the first part.
- Jesus has been teaching and preaching, working long hours and offending some pretty high-level people.
- The family is concerned. They are worried that Jesus has gone insane, and although they worry about his safety, they also worry that Jesus is going to destroy the family name.

- For us to understand what is about to take place, we have to put ourselves back in the time when Jesus lived.
- See, in our world, we don't usually find our identity in our family. We grow up, often move away, and find our identity in a group of friends from work or a team or college.

- However, in Jesus' day, you didn't do that.

"The family bond was tight and long-lasting. As with many non-Western cultures today, it was normal for children to live close to their parents, maybe even in the same house. The family unit would often be a business unit as well, sharing everything in common. What's more, for Jews the close family bond was part of the God-given fabric of thinking and living. Loyalty to the family was the local and specific out-working of loyalty to Israel as the people of God."¹
- That's why they are so worried about what Jesus is up to. It isn't that Jesus will just be the weird uncle that nobody talks about at Christmas; he is hurting the family, maybe even the family business, when he goes off acting insane like this.
- That's why they head from Nazareth down to where Jesus is teaching, and they are going to forcibly bring him back home and talk some sense into him.
- Can you imagine being Jesus? He is teaching and preaching and working miracles, and your family, who you grew up with, even your own mom, thinks you are insane?
- Into that context, we see that what Jesus did next is even more shocking. Jump down to **verse 31-35**.
- This would have been a shot straight to the heart of Mary and Jesus' half-brothers.
- In an instant, he pushed back against the social and religious understanding of the day, seeming to attack the very heart of the primary institution in life, the family.
- Let's take a closer look, though, to see the point Jesus is making.

¹ Wright, Tom. [*Mark for Everyone*](#). London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004. Print.

- Since Jesus is God in the flesh, he takes this opportunity to explain to us how we become a part of the family of God.
 - You see, contrary to what many believe, we are not all a part of God's family.
 - It is true that he created everyone and that everyone in the world is made in the image of God.
 - However, Jesus makes it very clear this morning that the only way to have a relationship with God, the only way to be a part of God's family, is by following Him.
 - If you get nothing else from this message, I want you to understand that you only become a part of the family of God when you surrender to him.
- **Let's make three observations about this passage:**

1) You aren't a part of the family because of your heritage.

- This was the first and most shocking part of what Jesus said.
 - He wasn't saying that we don't have family ties or that we shouldn't honor our parents.
 - In fact, if you were with us at our Good Friday service, you know that one of Jesus' final acts before his death was to make sure his mother was taken care of.
 - What he was saying was that those who have a relationship with Christ have an even greater allegiance than to their earthly family.
- That may not seem like that big a deal to us, but when he said it, it would have been a huge deal to the people who heard it.
 - As we mentioned in the introduction, the family was the primary place that defined your identity as a person.

- But, beyond that, remember that he was speaking to Jews, who were God's special people.
 - They thought they were the only ones who could really be in a relationship with God because they were Abraham's descendants.
 - God called a man named Abraham to himself and his descendants became the Jews.
 - They were a unique group of people. God dealt differently with them than with anyone else on the planet.
 - He revealed his law to them, he gave them a special land to live in, his presence dwelt in their temple.
 - No other family, no other nation on earth, enjoyed those privileges.
 - However, God never intended for them to be the only people in right relationship with him. Instead of using their unique relationship with God to help others come to know him, they let it become a source of pride.
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- So now, here comes Jesus, saying that your family heritage doesn't matter!
 - This was a radical shift as he points out that God is building a new family.
 - From the very beginning, Jesus has been pushing back against the Jews' unrighteous pride, but it becomes very blatant here.
 - He is calling people from all walks of life into his family, regardless of their background.
 - By the way, the Bible calls non-Jews "Gentiles" or "Greeks".
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- This was so revolutionary that it took the first Christians a while to fully accept this truth.

- However, as the early church started to figure out what God was doing, the apostle Paul would sum it up this way:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.
(Galatians 3:28–29, NASB95)
- You weren't saved because of your family background; you are saved because you are in Christ, you belong to him now, which makes you a part of the family of God.
- Don't lose sight of how important this is for us: although non-Jews could be saved in the Old Testament, they didn't enjoy the full privileges of a relationship with God that the Jews did.
- Now, because of what Jesus has done, there is no distinction, and we can enjoy every aspect of a relationship with God, no matter our family background.
- Even though we don't think too much about the whole Jew/Gentile thing anymore, there are still people who are relying on their family heritage to get them to heaven.
- They think, "Well, my mom and dad were active in church, and I always went with them, so I must be right with God."
- You aren't put into the family of God just because your parents were good people!
- Even if your parents were some of the godliest, most Jesus-following people in history, you are not automatically a part of the family of God by being born into a Christian home.
- I hope you had the privilege, like I did, of growing up with parents who believed in Jesus.
- They gave me a great foundation and example to follow. In fact, my dad leaves this afternoon to go to Washington DC to

fly out in the morning for Zimbabwe to take the Gospel and equip church leaders there to reach people with the life-changing message of Jesus.

- Having parents like that is a huge privilege, and it made it easier for me to come to Christ on my own, but it didn't automatically make me a part of the kingdom of God.
- The first observation we make from this passage is that your family background doesn't get you into the family of God.
- **Let's step back from these specific verses and make a second observation about what else doesn't get us into God's family:**

2) You aren't a part of the family because of your good deeds.

- We don't have to pull back far to find this truth.
- This has been something we have seen all throughout the book of Mark so far.
- The conflict Jesus has faced has primarily come through the religious leaders.
- As we mentioned at the beginning, they opposed Jesus' teaching, his miracles, how he spent his time, and everything else.
- If you remember, they were all about making sure everything they did looked good. They were meticulous about every ordinance, every ceremony, and looked like they were fully right with God on the outside.

- However, as we have seen in their interactions with Jesus, they were more concerned with appearances and traditions than they were with the actual truth and following Christ.
- When Jesus challenged them to look at God's word in the correct way, they got angry, because it wasn't what they had always done.
- We even saw back in **verse 6** of this chapter that when he challenged them to care about people more than they cared about their traditions, they set out to have him killed.
- Although they were doing all kinds of things that looked good, they were not doing the will of God!
- They were putting their ideas, their habits, and their practices above what God said in his word.
- Jesus gave this warning elsewhere:

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’ (Matthew 7:21–23, NASB95)
- Look at that warning again! God forbid that there be anyone in our church family who thinks that they are right with God because they come every Sunday or give or serve in this way or that.
- God forbid that anyone we know would stand before God and think that somehow, they have done enough to save themselves.

- **That's the third observation we want to make: You do not earn your spot in the family of God; you are given one by surrendering to his will.**

3) You are a part of the family because you surrender to his will.

- Go back to Jesus' words in **Mark 3:34-35**
- The only way to be a part of the family of God is to surrender to his will.

- Let's explain that term "will" for a second. We are not talking about Jesus' last will and testament that explains what happens to his money after he died.
- "Will" here is the idea of God's desire for what he wants accomplished.
- Ever heard that someone has "lost the will to live?" That's what we're talking about...they lost the desire to live.

- So, submitting ourselves to the will of God means that we stop trying to live life on our own terms and surrender to living life however he directs and leads.
- We are surrendering to treat people how he wants, to study his word to get to know him better, to seek wisdom from him before we make a decision, to rest in him by praying and laying everything at his feet.
- It starts with a decision to stop trusting that you can get to heaven because your mom or dad was a good Christian person.
- You stop trusting in yourself to do enough good things to get you to heaven.

- Like Jesus' disciples did, you lay everything down and follow him.
 - All your hopes, all your plans, all your dreams, all your relationships, all your money, all your time, you submit it all to him.
 - That's what the people Jesus is talking about had done. The disciples left everything to follow Jesus, and if we want to be a part of his family, we have to do the same.
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- Why would we want to do that?
 - Because of who is inviting you to lay it all down.
 - You see, God is the one who made you. David said in **Psalm 139:13-16** that God knit you together in your mother's womb and knew every day of your life before even one of them came to be.
 - He knew where you would grow up, he knew what sins you would commit and what problems you would get into, and yet he lovingly made you.
 - Not only that, that very same God who made you has sustained you, giving you the very breath you breathe at this moment.
 - He did so because he wants to adopt you into his family.
 - If you have ever looked into adoption, you know it can be incredibly expensive.
 - For him, it would cost the life of his own Son.
 - You see, all the sin God knew we would commit, even before we were born, separated us from him.
 - The only way we could come back to him was for him to come rescue us, which Jesus did by dying on the cross and raising from the dead.
 - Here's how Peter, one of Jesus' closest followers, would describe that price:

knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. (1 Peter 1:18-19, NASB95)

- He went to those lengths, allowing his own blood to be spilled, so you could surrender to his will and be right with him again.
- Once you have that relationship, you are a part of the family of God. It changes how you behave, how you look at life, and you will probably do some of the things the Pharisees were doing.
- The difference is that you will be doing the will of God because your heart will be to honor the God who saved you, not to gain recognition or somehow earn your way into God's family.
- Have you done that, or are you still trying to save yourself?
- Stop; you can't earn your way into the family of God.
- Instead, surrender to his will and then walk in obedience, knowing that you are a child of the living God.

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. (Romans 8:16-17, NASB95)

- Rest today in your place in the family of God.