

2024-06-09 Mark 3:20-35 Jesus's Family SERMON

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Jesus has been walking the countryside by the sea of Galilee with His disciples. He healed and cast out demons as they travelled. A large crowd was following them as usual. Jesus is like a magnet. Finally, He was able to slip away in a boat then climbed the mountain to pray. This morning we meet Him in Capernaum and our story begins.

The crowd shows up making it difficult for Jesus and the disciples to eat. We are not told how they interrupted the meal, but they did. They wanted to see him. It was a huge crowd, and it does not take too much imagination to understand how they got underfoot and derailed the quiet meal.

Jesus brings anxiety and disruption with him so - the usual suspects are in attendance – the scribes. They had heard He was in the vicinity and have arrived to gather more dirt against Him.

His family also appears – their mission – bring Him home as they think He is out of His mind.

The scribes came quite a distance all the way from Jerusalem, 120 miles away. It is most likely they heard about His demonic exorcisms. The scribes do not dispute that the miracles and exorcisms had happened. The scribes knew the crowd had seen the healings and deliverances. So they begin their tirade with - Jesus himself. He is possessed by a demon, and that it is by the power of the enemy that he casts out the demons.

To make matters worse, Jesus' family arrives on the scene. They do not enter the house, but wait outside and send in a messenger, who announces, "Your Mom and your brothers are here, and they want to talk to you."

What does Jesus do? He does not go out to greet them. You might expect him to ignore his brothers, but his mother is here. This is his family, and family is at the core of everything in ancient times. His actions are why they have come. They have

heard about his exploits and are afraid he is causing embarrassment and bringing disrespect to the family name.

We are not told why they remain outside, but various commentaries provide some reasons: first, Capernaum was a hub for Roman soldiers and Roman tax collectors and not a strictly Jewish town. Perhaps they did not want to enter what might be a Gentile house or take a chance that Gentiles were in the house.

Second, the scribes are calling him a demon possessed man, and they might not want to be linked to Jesus. Third, their intent was to grab him and go back to Nazareth. They do not want to make a scene by entering the house. No, they opted to ask him to come out to them. They do not want to air the “dirty laundry” in public. This is a private family affair.

How does Jesus respond to the summons? He does not go out to greet them but asks, *“Who are my mother and my brothers?”*

He acts like he does not know his family! Does He have amnesia and not recall who they are to Him? Far from it. He uses this opportunity to let everyone know who His family is.

Imagine how Mary and his brothers must feel. They are his flesh and blood family. This mattered in Judaism as it meant you were part of the covenant family of God.

Jesus is stirring the pot – He is changing things. We can almost hear Mary saying in her mind – “Son, it will be a long time before I make your favorite lamb stew.”

A few weeks ago we celebrated Pentecost when the Spirit came down and the apostles spoke in their own languages and were understood. On Pentecost a new thing was happening, God was making a new people for Himself of every tribe and nation and tongue.

Jesus seems to be doing the same new thing here. He is saying those who are connected to Him are not just those born in the flesh as His family. Notice what He did not say. He does not

disown his mother and brothers. He does not say, "They are not my family."

Instead, He looks at the crowd sitting around him and says, *"Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."*

He does not throw his family out but includes all in the crowd. Who are the ones sitting around him, sitting at his feet, listening to him, and believing in Him? They are you and me. Centuries later, we too, are part of the crowd.

How does being included affect us? What does it mean for us? It means we are members of God's family because we are born of the Spirit through our baptisms. We are Christ's brothers and sisters for we do His Father's will. We believe in Jesus, the one whom the Father has sent.

We are not in Jesus' family because we are born to Lutheran parents or grandparents, or because our family has always been

members of Christ the Victor. If that were the criteria, some of us would be excluded from the family.

Church is a family affair, not by lineage but because Christ has made us brothers and sisters through Him. Church is unity in Christ. Each of us believes and we are all together His family - because Christ has said so.

We are family and no, family life is not always pretty. In fact, if you are looking for perfect let me tell you - following Jesus is messy! When Jesus is loose in the world things are going to be chaotic, disorganized and muddled.

My sisters and brothers, the Good News is we have unity in Christ because Christ has declared it. Having been made His family, we trust Him, and know He keeps His promises. We do the will of the Father by believing in Christ and living in His love. His love is perfect though we are not. Together, we abide in His love as His family. We serve Him and others, until He comes again. Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again! Amen and amen.