

Mark 3:20–35

²⁰They went into a house. A crowd gathered again so that they were not even able to eat a meal. ²¹When his own people heard this, they went out to take control of him, because they were saying, “He is out of his mind.” ²²The experts in the law who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “He drives out demons by the ruler of demons.” ²³Jesus called them together and spoke to them in parables. “How can Satan drive out Satan? ²⁴If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. ²⁶And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand but is finished. ²⁷On the other hand, no one can enter a strong man’s house to steal his possessions unless he ties up the strong man first. Then he can plunder his house. ²⁸Amen I tell you: Everything will be forgiven people, their sins and whatever blasphemies they may speak. ²⁹But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.” ³⁰Jesus said this because they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.” ³¹Then his mother and his brothers arrived. While they were standing outside, they sent word to Jesus, calling for him. ³²A crowd was sitting around him. They began to tell him, “Look, your mother and your brothers are outside looking for you.” ³³He replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” ³⁴He looked at those who sat around him in a circle and he said, “Look, my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ For whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

Sermon for Pentecost 3, June 13, 2021; St. Paul’s Green Garden,

Text: Mark 3:20-35

Theme: “Who is Jesus’ Real Family?”

In the name of Jesus, dear fellow redeemed,

Every so often you hear of a situation where babies are switched at birth, though it does happen infrequently. In one situation a fourteen year old girl and her family learned that she and another infant girl had been switched at birth. So instead of growing up in her birth family, she grew up with parents to whom she did not originally belong. Imagine that girl’s struggle when she discovered at age 14 that the parents whom she knew as mom and dad were not her biological parents. Imagine her struggle for identity. All along she believed that she was descended from her parental family and always belonged to them. But she discovered that her life was more complicated than that.

Some time later, she went to court to divorce herself from her biological parents so that they could no longer visit her or have any connection to her. Apparently she

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wanted to make the statement that she belonged to the parents who raised her. By going to court she wanted to clarify who her real family was.

Though it probably happens rarely, there will always be a few individuals who will have to wrestle with their family identity for one reason or another. Though Jesus was unique among all human beings he never had to struggle with his identity. He knew who his true father is and who his adopted father was. He knew where he had come from and the mission he was responsible to accomplish on this earth.

Though Jesus never struggled with his family identity, many people, since the shepherds first worshiped at Bethlehem's manger, have struggled over Jesus' family identity. We, too, sometimes struggle over Jesus, his family identity and how we might truly understand him better. Today the gospel writer Mark by inspiration, shows us several groups who really wanted an answer to the question, "Who is Jesus' Real Family?"

Apparently, his Mother and brothers had no struggle with the Savior's family identity. They were ready to take him home with them. Jesus was in Capernaum, a city in Galilee, not too far from his home town of Nazareth. Matthew tells us in his gospel that the visit by his Mother and brothers came after he had made it possible for a blind, and mute, demon-possessed man to both see and speak.

It seems that as a result of this and other miracles, the crowds began to gather, and follow Jesus in increasing numbers. Surely there were some who were merely curious, who wanted to see the 'magic' of his mighty wonders. Others who perhaps looked at life from the perspective of God's Savior promises, may have wondered whether or not Jesus might be the Son of David. It is also obvious from what Mark says in this third chapter that Jesus also attracted bitter opponents. The sheer numbers of people who wanted to see and hear him, seem to have left Jesus and his disciples little time to eat.

Since he was not far from Nazareth, the news of his popularity soon reached his mother and step-brothers. They were so concerned about Jesus, they felt it was necessary to take action. Perhaps they believed he was on some popularity trip, or that he was going to get himself in trouble with the authorities. Whatever their thinking, they seem to have believed that HE was not thinking clearly. As far as they could determine, he seemed to be out of his mind.

Believing they would be helping him they appeared outside the house where he had been preaching and teaching. It is obvious that they did not understand his mission in this world. Jesus had come to seek and to save lost sinners. They didn't understand that he had to teach people the truth that because of their sins they could never be right with God unless HE, their Savior, would rescue them from the punishment they deserved for their sins. His birth family didn't understand, so they wanted to take him away by force.

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What they failed to see was that if they took him away they were really placing themselves in opposition to God and his plans. Those who seek to work at cross-purposes with Jesus and his Father are not his true family. And though his birth family did not understand at that time, yet, we are told in another place that later, at least some of his brothers did believe in him.

Of course, we could stand here and say how thick-headed Jesus' birth family was for not understanding his mission, and purpose for coming to this world. But the truth is, they are not here any longer and we are. We are susceptible to the same sins as they were. We, too, fail to understand Jesus and his mission. We misunderstand his love for us and think that because he died for us we shouldn't have to suffer trouble or tragedy. At other times we give in to the idea that Jesus came just to give us a fine example of how to get to heaven. No, Scripture tells us that through we receive righteousness from God as a free gift through faith alone. Our false beliefs place us in danger of forfeiting our place as member of Jesus' real family. Yet, Jesus' words here also bring us the comfort that even our false believes are forgiven for his sake.

It is important to Jesus that we be members of his real family. Jesus had the same love for all the people at his time. He even loved his enemies. He wanted them, too, to believe in him and become members of his family. His enemies, however, believed he belonged to Satan's family.

It almost seems amazing that anyone could accuse Jesus of being in league with Satan. He had ordered the demon to depart from the possessed man previous to this incident, so that the man could again use his gifts of sight and speech to glorify God. How could anyone look upon such an act of love and say it was done by the power of Satan?

It seems that the teachers of the law here were the heavy-hitters from Jerusalem who had come to assist the local religious leaders in opposing Jesus. His enemies could not deny Jesus' tremendous miracle so they questioned the source of his power. They refused to believe that Jesus is God's Son. So the only other thing they could accuse him of, was that he was an ally of Satan.

But Jesus used several comparisons to prove to them that he could not be in a partnership with Satan. He used these parables for a specific reason. Those who wanted to know the truth would find it in his words. But those who were only looking to trap him would simply be confused and dumbfounded. In other words Jesus' parables would show his enemies for what they really were.

Jesus was really telling them that their accusations made no sense. If he had been casting out demons by Satan's power, Satan would be working against himself. **“How can Satan drive out Satan? ²⁴If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. ²⁶And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand**

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but is finished. Jesus used the comparison of a country divided by civil war. Over the past several decades we have seen examples of civil war in countries such as Bosnia, Mozambique and Somalia just to name a few. Civil strife in those countries did not make them stronger, but rather weakened them. Countries with unchecked civil war usually end up being destroyed unless the disagreement is settled. Jesus was really telling his enemies, Satan would not allow me into his family only to have me work against him.

He also compared his enemies' accusations to a thief's attempt to rob someone's home. If the thief cannot gain the element of surprise he must resort to force by taking away the owner's ability to protect his home. Jesus indicates that He is doing that very thing to Satan. He was casting demons out of people to show that Satan's power is already restricted. Jesus had already effectively defeated Satan.

The Savior did not take the accusations of his enemies personally however. Rather he showed his great love for his enemies. He warned them to stop their unbelief. We note that he first offered them gospel promises: "**Amen I tell you: Everything will be forgiven people, their sins and whatever blasphemies they may speak.**" But Jesus wanted to warn them to avoid the sin against the Holy Spirit. He warned them about persistent unbelief that not only thinks but speaks evil against God in spite of the promptings of the Holy Spirit. That sin is unforgivable because it is a persistent sin against one's better knowledge and without repentance.

Jesus proved that he is not in Satan's family and warned his enemies that they had better beware lest they find themselves working against God by calling Jesus a partner of the devil.

We may think we are not as bad as Jesus' enemies. But think of how we sometimes accuse Jesus of doing evil when he allows trouble and hardship to come to our lives. We are prone to ask, "Why, Jesus? How could you let this happen to me, one of your children?" And just like Job we accuse God of being arbitrary and harming us for no reason, just because he wants to. Yet our Lord has promised that he will make good come from everything in our lives, even the troubles and hurts. And we can trust His promise because we are beloved members of his family for Jesus' sake.

Jesus' warning to his enemies is also one for us to take seriously. The sin against the Holy Spirit, persistent unbelief against our better knowledge is not something to tamper with. From time to time Christians go to their pastors fearful that they have committed this sin. Yet, Christians can be assured that their very concern about this sin would surely indicate that they are not guilty of it. God's children can take all of their sins to Jesus and have unconditional assurance that they are forgiven members of God's family.

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Though Jesus was misunderstood by his birth family and accused of belonging to Satan's he did not allow himself to be buried in rejection. Rather, he considers his true family to be his adopted family of believers.

While Jesus was speaking to his enemies he was told that his mother and brothers had arrived and wanted to talk with him. Jesus replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" Now surely Jesus does not take the gift of family lightly. He had showed his love for his family by obeying his parents and later by providing for his mother at the time of his death.

So Jesus' question, "**Who are my mother and my brothers?**" was not meant to imply that he had disowned his birth family but rather a question of who his true, spiritual family really is.

Jesus' mission to save us was always his foremost priority. He was not about to let anyone interfere with his promise. He would not allow his enemies, nor Peter, nor his earthly family to keep him from living a life perfectly pleasing to his Father and laying down his innocent life as the only acceptable payment for our sins. That is the depth of Jesus' love for us. **Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.**

Everyone who believes in Jesus and his mission of payment and forgiveness for our sins is a member of his adopted family. Jesus said, "**Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.**" And God's will is simply this, that we trust Jesus' forgiveness and believe he has done absolutely everything to make us God's holy children.

Jesus said, "**I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.**" Baptism is how God brings us into his family, creating faith in our hearts. God's children who believe in him, will do his will as a natural result of their faith.

What a blessed assurance that our family identity is secure. Though we have misunderstood Jesus' mission, though we have accused him of not doing right when troubles and hardships come to our lives, though we have, at times, demanded that he be something he is not, all those wrongs are forgiven. Believe that what Jesus said is true, "**Everything will be forgiven people, their sins and whatever blasphemies they may speak.**" They are forgiven even now. Cling to that because your life depends on it. You are adopted by Christ into his real family.

You will never have to question your own identity. You will never have to wonder where you belong. Even if all your earthly family were to die or forsake you, you know that you are a member of Jesus real family, a family who loves him because he bought us with his own blood. Amen.