**SUNDAY 6/6/21**

**SERMON**

**MARK 3:20-35**

Families can be very difficult.

If you think your family has problems,

          consider the marriage mayhem created

          when 76-year-old Bill Baker of London married 73-year-old Edna Harvey.

Edna happened to be Bill's granddaughter's husband's mother.

And then the confusion got even worse.

According to Bill Baker's granddaughter, Lynn:

          "My mother-in-law is now my step-grandmother.

          My grandfather is now my stepfather-in-law.

          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."

The relationships became so confusing no one could keep them straight.

Finally all the family members gave up.

When outsiders asked how they were related,

          they simply stated: We are all family.

Even Jesus at times had difficulty with his family.

His family did not always understand him.

They were concerned for his welfare because he was so busy.

Jesus and his followers did not even have time enough to eat and rest.

His family were concerned that he was out of his mind.

The crowd surrounding him told Jesus:

          "Your mother and you brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you."

But Jesus told them everyone who trusted and obeyed God

          were His brothers and sisters.

This was a new concept for them.

Such a large, complicated family was beyond their understanding.

Jesus wasn't ignoring his family,

He was simply trying to teach family was ever so much more

          than most people imagined.

But if we stop and consider that we all have the same Heavenly Father,

          then we have to admit we are all family.

Everyone, throughout all time, and in all places,

          who obeys the will of God, is part of His family.

That neighbor who is so annoying is part of our family?

The stranger whom we have never met is related to us?

Those who do not look like us, or talk like us, or dress like us –

          are family?

People who do not worship like us, pray like us, sing like us –

          are members of our family?

This all seems very difficult – nearly impossible.

And yet our Heavenly Father loves us.

He has made us his children.

God loves our neighbors – each and every one of them.

He has made all people who obey Him, our brothers and sisters, our family.

God accepted us, and teaches us to accept each other.

God requires us to be kind and loving to each other,

          and to forgive one another as God has forgiven us.

But it is not always easy.

In fact, it is very difficult.

Without God's help it is impossible.

We are all members of God's forever family.

God wants us to love and care for each other – even those we don't like.

Whoever does the will of God, is our brother and our sister.

God requires that we love one another,

          because that is what family means.

We may not get along with everyone, we may not like many of them,

          but they are family.

So we help and encourage each other.

We strengthen and build one another up.

We care for each other even when we would rather not.

That is what it means to be part of God's family.

Our Heavenly Father knows how difficult it can be.

Often we are not sure what to do, or how to help.

We want to see God's whole plan.

But that is really much more than we can handle at one time.

So God shows how to follow His will, one step at a time.

Young Jimmy was visiting his grandparents, who lived on a farm.

One night his Grandmother asked Jimmy to go out to the barn and feed the cow. Jimmy protested, "But grandmother, I can't see the barn. It's too dark."

His grandmother handed him a lantern.

She stood on the porch and said, "Can you see the well?"

Jimmy said, "Yes ma'am."

She said, "Walk to the well."

When he got to the well she said, "Can you see the apple tree?"

Jimmy said, "Yes ma'am."

Grandmother said, "Well then, walk to the apple tree."

Then she said, "Jimmy can you see the barn now?"

He said, "Yes ma'am!"

She said, "Then Jimmy, go feed the cow."

And Jimmy did.

We can seldom solve the big problem.

God knows that.

So He leads us one step at a time.

Often it is the little things – a greeting, a smile, a word of welcome –

          which makes a great difference to someone

          who is lost, or lonely, or struggling.

There is something special about families.

Our families can be the source of the greatest joy, and the deepest heartaches. There's more emotion attached to our families than any other unit in society.

God cares for us in tough times

He expects us to care for one another every way we can.

And we celebrate with each other in the good times.

As God's family we are not perfect.

Relationships are often difficult, but that is what makes them interesting.

We often have our differences, but nothing is more important

          than caring for family.

Family is a meaningful connection, an experience.

It is comfort in a world of uncertainty.

It is a shoulder to lean on.

It is a source of inspiration.

Family is love and support.

It is that warm and fuzzy feeling.

It is wonderful.

Family is necessary.

That is God's plan, and has been since the beginning of time.

Being part of God's family means we are a part of something very wonderful.

It means we will love and be loved forever.

Belonging to God's family is God's idea.

Family is one of God's greatest masterpieces.

AMEN