

Jesus' Impact on Family (Mark 3:20-21; 31-35)

The crowds continued to grow. While Jesus was indoors, a crowd prevented him and his disciples from having a meal. Imagine a doctor in a clinic with hundreds of patients queuing up to see him. It is such a long queue that he has to skip lunch in order to attend to all of them. Jesus was in a similar situation. Two groups of people were assessing his actions: his family and a group of teachers of the law.

Jesus' family members were concerned about him. He was endangering himself by making the religious authorities angry with him. Perhaps popularity was going to his head! His forgoing meals to minister to the crowds was the last straw—perhaps he was better off returning to his small, quiet business in Nazareth. They concluded “He is out of his mind” and went to “take charge of him (v. 21). It must have grieved Jesus to be misunderstood by those close to him. This sounds like his family was doing an intervention, doesn't it?

So, the rumors about Jesus reached Mary and her other children back in Nazareth. Those boys' names were James, Judas, Simon, and Joseph; there were sisters, but their names are not listed in the Bible. They did not believe in Jesus at this time and there were various interpretations concerning their relationship to Jesus. First, they were sons of Joseph from a previous marriage or they were cousins. The most natural conclusion is that they were the sons of Joseph and Mary, the younger half-brothers of Jesus.

Mary and her family were extremely concerned about Jesus' welfare and were somewhat embarrassed over Him. So they struck out to get him and bring him home before something terrible happened. When they arrived and Jesus was informed of their presence, He made a shocking claim: there is a greater family existing than the human family—a family that has supremacy over blood relationships. It is the family of God. Note the facts given. They were “standing outside” apparently

embarrassed, not wishing to approach Jesus in front of the crowd lest a scene be created. They “sent someone in to call him” to take him home. The crowd informed him of the family’s presence outside, and note: they added the words “looking for you.” The crowd was apparently aware of the family’s embarrassment and thoughts that He was “out of his mind” and needed to be taken home.

Something significant had happened that brought Jesus’ family to get him and take him home. What happened that caused Mary and his brothers to come for him? What was so serious that they had to send someone else inside to get him instead of going in themselves or at least waiting until the meeting was over? What would cause them to seek to interrupt and stop the preaching of Jesus? What would cause Jesus to proclaim such shocking words at this time (vv.34-35)? There seem to be **three** reasons.

First, the public, even some friends of Jesus and the family were saying, “He is out of his mind,” mad, insane. **Two** things caused this charge. **Number One**, he was

working very hard, in fact, so hard that he was “not able to eat.” He was so swamped by the people to the extent that he was forced to skip meals and do without rest. His refusing to leave the frenzied atmosphere in order to eat and rest—such behavior going on day after day and month after month—led some to wonder if he was mad, abnormal in craving the attention and adulation and frenzy of the crowds. The **Number two** reason for the charge is that Jesus was proclaiming himself to be the Son of God. He made many claims that were so unusual that he was thought insane. A quick glance will show just how phenomenal Jesus' claims were and why he was so opposed by many, even by his own family.

The **second reason** for all the questions is that the rulers, both political and religious, were increasingly opposing Jesus. The family was alarmed and feared for his life. And the **third reason** was the news of his claim to be the Son of God reached the family, and the neighbors were saying that such a claim was preposterous, utter insanity. In addition, the neighbors and friends were whispering about his insanity and about his conflict with the leaders

of the nation. All this did to Mary and the family was what such news would do to any family; it caused and stirred a mother's deep love and responsibility for her Son. She left immediately to go for him, to bring him home in order to save him from harm and the family from further embarrassment.

Some penetrating questions need to be asked and answered by all of us. How many of you are embarrassed by Jesus? How many of you are ashamed to stand up for Jesus and his claims? How many of you fear what neighbors and friends will say if you take a stand for Jesus? How many of you want to take Jesus home and lock him up in a room where his claims will not bother anyone?

At this point, a legitimate question needs to be asked: How could Mary not believe Jesus' claims after her experience with God concerning the birth of Jesus? The answer is given in an honest and open-hearted study of the Scripture. **One**, Mary was a wonderful woman, the woman chosen for a very special mission: to be the person through whom God would send "His one and only

Son" into the world (John 3:16). But it must always be remembered that Mary was only human. She was a very special woman, yes; nevertheless, she was still only human. Her being special was only in that she was highly favored by God. Her being special was not because of any virtue or merit of her own. It was because of God, because of his mercy and his grace alone.

Two, Mary's deep experience with God had happened some thirty years before. Thirty or more years is a long time for human creatures to maintain the reality and meaning of a religious experience. Human emotions rise and fall almost daily. **Three**, as a mother, as flesh and blood, Mary had a difficult time (as anyone in her situation would) understanding the mission and Messiahship of her Son Jesus. Mary had believed God's messenger but she had not fully understood. She apparently "treasured up all these things to herself and pondered them in her heart." Thirteen years later Mary had difficulty understanding the mission of her twelve-year-old Son when he was found in the temple having

been lost for two days. When they found him, he was engaged in a most unusual questioning with the temple priests. Jesus asked his mother, "Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" Some seventeen years after the temple experience, Mary called upon her son to help at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Jesus saw in the request an opportunity to begin familiarizing his mother with just who he really was, the Son of God. She was slow to grasp his purpose, so he gave a mild rebuke, "Dear woman, why do you involve me? My time has not yet come." The word "woman" indicates a change in Jesus' priorities—he placed his heavenly Father and His business first. Henceforth, Jesus will be following only his heavenly Father's schedule and instructions.

Four, Mary had known Jesus as one of her children and as a young man for some thirty years. She had known Jesus only in a day-to-day routine environment. Then all of a sudden, he pulled up stakes, left home, and left what was apparently a flourishing carpentry business. The events that occurred from the moment he left, happened

so rapidly over the next few months and were so dramatic, that Mary was bound to feel bombarded and perplexed. She and all the others who were close to Jesus were having to learn that he was not just a man, but the Son of God himself.

True kinship is not just blood relationship. I will make note of **two** facts that relate to this point. **First**, Jesus is not downgrading the family or human ties to blood relatives. No one was ever more devoted to the family than Jesus. This is seen in his care of Mary throughout his life, including when he was on the cross and said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to John, "Here is your mother" (Luke 19:26-27). In addition, Jesus' teaching, and the teaching of his disciples throughout scripture was devoted to the family. This is also seen in his impact upon society's treatment of women, children, and family. And finally, his own half-brothers eventually became disciples of His. The **second** fact that is related to true kinship is Jesus saying that human genes, family blood, and traits are not enough to create and make a genuine family. A true family, a true

kinship does not exist just because some people have common blood and traits. This is clearly seen in the pages of family histories every day. Too many families are in turmoil, divided and torn apart. Too many families are in constant conflict ranging from mild verbal assaults to murderous assaults. Now, picture this scene. Jesus is standing before the crowd.

He has just been told that his mother and brothers are outside “looking” for him. In this event, he sees a unique opportunity to teach a much-needed lesson. Stretching out his arms toward the crowd, he cries out, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” He is proclaiming that blood relationships, family genes, and traits, are not enough to create true kinship. Something more is needed. We can find this in Scripture in **Luke 3:8**, “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.”

So, what is true kinship? True kinship is based on a common relationship with God. True kinship is a spiritual

relationship. God is Spirit, and those who would know and follow him must be in a spiritual union with him. True kinship is a matter of the spirit, heart, and mind. All who are in *spiritual union* with God become sons and daughters of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus. They comprise the true family of God. Jesus points out **two** facts. The **first** fact is that true kinship is based upon being a true disciple, a true follower of God. Note the words, "He looked at those seated in a circle around him." **Matthew** says in **12:49**, that the persons Jesus was looking at were his disciples. He was saying that his true family were the disciples, those who had accepted him as Lord and Master. It was their acceptance of him in spirit and heart that bound them together. He was saying that all who follow him are spiritually united. They constitute a kinship that is based upon having the same Lord and Master. We find this in **John 1:12**, "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." The **second** fact of true kinship is based upon doing the will of God. Jesus had given himself to do God's will. The disciples had accepted Jesus as their Lord and Master. Therefore, the

were committed to do exactly what their Lord did: the will of God. The will of God became the objective and drive of their lives. All true disciples of Jesus have the same objective: to do the will of God. Therefore, it is the spiritual commitment to do the will of God that binds all believers together. All men who focus their lives upon the will of God are bound together spiritually, bound together to do the will of God. Jesus is saying no greater kinship exists. One final thought: The will of God is the law of God—the Ten Commandments. Which is what we can find in **Psalm 40:8**, “I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”

What are the **lessons** we can learn from this Scripture reading? As the true family of Jesus, we should recognize the beauty and rightness of his words and ways. As his followers, we should have our eyes open to the things of Christ and be ready to follow him in obedience. As the true family of Jesus, we should not be ashamed to be associated with him. We should be faithful and live out our faith with confidence. As the true family of Jesus, there may be times when we are put at odds with our

earthly family. We can endure difficulties as we remember that in Christ, we will receive more than we will ever lose. As the true family of Jesus, we should rejoice in the privilege of being part of his family.

Please bow your heads as I pray.

Heavenly Father, we pray for our own families where growing up is difficult, where harsh words spoken in anger are not easily taken back, and hurtful or thoughtless actions are endangering relationships. Lord, empower your children to be patient, slow to anger, and to become wise in their speaking and acting as your family in Christ. How amazing it is to realize that by grace through faith in Christ, I have become a member of your holy, heavenly family and that in him, I have the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. Thank you for this amazing relationship that I have in Christ Jesus and I pray that by your grace I may present my body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to you—for your praise and glory. This I ask in Jesus' name. **Amen.**