

6/10/2018

“One of the Family”

Scripture: Mark 3:20-35

Third Sunday after Pentecost

Theme: Jesus welcomes and acknowledges all who do God’s will as part of his family.

† **People come from various family backgrounds and circumstances, sometimes disagreeing with one another on faith and other issues**

As summertime is upon us, many of us will be making plans or already starting to take family vacations. When I served in Virginia for a number of years in my earlier days of pastoral ministry, many people would take a weekly or monthly trip to “the riva”. And, still others would have an annual family reunion with many cousins coming from all around, even out of state. Sometimes, it was a great way to affirm and rekindle old ties, and sometimes it meant facing the challenges of strained or torn relations.

As I’ve shared with you before, I came from a somewhat diverse extended family when it came to culture, nationalities of origin just a generation or two removed, as well as faith, not to mention political preferences. And, most, if not all relatives, were middle-class; employed in various occupations and levels; including sales, trucking, banking, medical, and others. But, we all felt a deep sense of love and appreciation for one another. True, that doesn’t mean everyone agreed about everything, but everyone pitched in to help in one way or another.

There was fun and games, good conversations and discussions, plenty of good food, and at the end of the day there was hugging, handshakes and kissing goodbye until the next time. And, quite often, one of us Gutmakers would bring along a friend to share in the experience.

In the summertime, my immediate family didn’t take vacations as such. I remember once or twice going as far as Atlantic City, in the days before the casinos. But, we would usually all get together on Memorial Day, the Fourth of July or Labor Day at my Uncle Tony and Aunt Adele’s at the Presidential Lakes in New Jersey. It was a man-made lake with lots of what we called “sea weed” at the bottom. For many years it was just their vacation home, a simple rancher, which my uncle did a good bit of work on himself. Then, as his sons grew older, they helped do more work on it as well. I’ve heard some similar stories from some of you about some of the families and homes in this area as well.

Our gospel reading today shares a special story about what little we know of what most believe was Jesus’ natural family. It’s of a time during his adult ministry. And actually, it also reveals an even greater family of his.

† **God’s will is prompted and empowered by the Holy Spirit (vs. 20-30)**

Mark tells us (3:20-30):

²⁰ Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. ²¹ When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.” ²² And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.”

²³ So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. ²⁶ And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. ²⁷ In fact, no one can enter a strong man’s house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man’s house.

²⁸ “Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, ²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.”

³⁰ He said this because they were saying, “He has an impure spirit.”

You see, some people were saying that the devil was using Jesus to cast out demons, denying that it was the working of the Holy Spirit or God working through him. Jesus was implying that they could even denounce him or his teachings, but not the work of the Holy Spirit. To denounce or blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, is the only sin which cannot be forgiven. Some scholars say that is because it takes the Holy Spirit to convince or convict us our sins. And, if we don’t acknowledge the Holy Spirit’s work within us, we won’t repent and can’t accept that forgiveness.

I know that sometimes people and families have difficulty accepting or offering forgiveness, because they don’t let the Holy Spirit into their lives and relationships. And, sometimes it’s difficult for people to truly forgive themselves or accept that forgiveness from God.

But, that’s just what God wants. That’s just what Jesus wants.

† Jesus wants to welcome you as “one of the family”

Let’s go back to those first few verses from Mark.

Then Jesus entered a house (in Capernaum by the shores of the Sea of Galilee, very likely that of Peter and his family). And, again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.”

His family from Nazareth, Mary and others were concerned that Jesus was in danger. They had heard the stories of his miracles and casting out demons. They heard of the great crowds around him. They likely heard that some of the religious leaders were saying he was possessed by the ruler of demons. And honestly, at this time, according to John’s gospel account, his own brothers did not believe in him (7:5).

So, when they arrived at the house in Capernaum where he was staying, Mark tells us (3:31-35):

³¹ Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him.

³² A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.” ³³ “Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked. ³⁴ Then he looked at those seated in a

circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

† **“Whoever”**, Jesus says. ***“Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”***

Now, I don’t think Jesus was denying his family of origin. Rather, he was acknowledging and expanding his spiritual family.

He is saying that it doesn’t really matter what our family of origin is like – good, bad or indifferent. It doesn’t matter where you come from, what race, color, creed, gender, class or other things that make you who you are.

What matters to Jesus is that you let him into your heart; that you receive God’s forgiveness and love for all that separates you from God.

What matters to Jesus is that you do God’s will by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Do you feel like, or know, you are part of Jesus’ family? If so, what difference does it make in your life? Do you know and feel the love, peace, hope and joy of being part of Christ’s family? I hope you do. And, I hope you share that with others.

If not, I invite you right now. Simply pray with me . . .

And may God’s loving power bless you today and always! In Jesus’ name, Amen.