

Luke 8:19-21; Mark 3:31-35 The Family of Christ I. The Close Relationship II. The Submissive Requirement

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, being a part of a family is one of the blessings that we tend to take for granted. Belonging to a household has both privileges but also responsibilities. But imagine for a minute that you did not have a family- that you grew up in an orphanage- not the good kind- but a place of neglect and abuse. Now picture that this individual would be adopted- by none other than the president! What a change in circumstance and residence! Well- today we find out about our true, family ties. With this theme: Jesus Christ identifies the members of His true family. These verses form the conclusion of the Parable of the Sower and His seed- now the 3rd time Jesus applies this truth- we need to hear and obey! This parable identifies those who listen and persevere with fruit- the lamp that lets the gospel of light be heard- those who receive the Word and respond in faith- it is these who are His family! Not only is Jesus speaking of the privilege that is ours- but the calling to implement what we hear! As we will see- faith trumps biology when it comes to the household of God! The church is more than coming from the line of Abraham- more than having the correct last name- the church is the place of faith and fruit! Added to this- we cannot love our family more than Christ- we must love Him more than our father or mother! So the family of God is a place of love- a love that trumps even family ties. So we see that Jesus identifies the members of His true family.

I. The Close Relationship

Jesus begins by revealing how He views His people- and who is close or connected to Him. And we start in v. 19 by finding out that Jesus' mother and brothers had come to see Jesus. Mark 3 expands upon this- as Jesus was teaching in a house that we filled to brim with people- his family was outside wanting to see Him. Now it is clear- as a starting point- that Jesus had an earthly family! This is no small point- Jesus was born of Mary- He shared her flesh and nature. Added to this- Joseph and Mary had other children after Jesus was born- we know of 4 brothers and 2 sisters- so Jesus had younger siblings. Now

this family was gathered outside- but they could not reach Jesus. They were seeking Jesus- to speak to him- perhaps even to rebuke him for not taking better care of himself. These were concerned about Jesus' wellbeing- knowing that the Pharisees and Jewish leaders were taking notice. We also know that at this point- His brothers did not believe. They doubted Jesus- John 7:5 says- they did not believe in him but wanted to test their older brother. Even his own mother did not fully grasp who her son was- she pondered these things but did not fully understand what her Son must do. So His family cared about Him- but did not believe as yet. But Jesus- upon hearing about his brothers and mother outside said- who is my brother and who is my mother? Think how these words would have struck- who is my family? I consider all as lost- Jesus is challenging the social structure. Let the dead bury their own dead Jesus would say- follow me! Forsake your father and mother- take up your cross- and come- the call of the gospel would be! Now this does not mean that Jesus had no care for his brothers and mother- but it does mean that Jesus is going to change the status quo! In that day the biological family was everything- the heritage and the genealogies a way to prove who you were and your right to be in the promised land. But Jesus calls into question the future heritage- just who belongs to the kingdom of God? It is not a question of blood line- but of faith! So Jesus continues- my mother and brother are those who hear the Word of God and do it! With these words, the loving, intimate relationship of the home is cast into new light! The family is the closest we can get to someone today- but Jesus says- my closest loved ones are not those share my last name! This agrees with the picture of the husband and wife union in Ephesian- or the head's relation to the body in Corinthians. By the Spirit, Jesus is saying that we can become Jesus' family! The relationship between Jesus and His disciples is closer than blood ties- a community with a shared identity more lasting than biological markers. The church is not a club- and Jesus is not some ringleader- rather He is a brother in family with his own. This really is the heart of the gospel- one the key benefits that God's people enjoy- Jesus places His highest priority on His people! As I Peter 3:18 says- Christ suffered once for sins in order to bring us to God! Salvation is about the making

of children- God adopting sons and daughter who are the kin of Christ! So even if you are not a Jew- even if you do not have Mary as your mother- you can still be called the children of God and call upon Jesus as your brother! As Heb. 11 says- those who are sanctified have one origin- that is why Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers! The fact is- Jesus was often socializing with sinners and healing the sick- and earlier in this chapter we read of the women and His disciples who were with Him in v. 3. These were near and dear to Jesus. You see- Jesus does not play favorites. Being in a spiritual relationship with Him is more important than physical lineage! We have a closer relationship to Christ than his own family! Jesus does not fit our pattern- His ministry is filled with such compassion- that He is not opposed to calling us- sinners- his siblings- God is pleased to call us His own- in an intimate bond- even union with Him! This is the privilege His church has! One family with God and one with one another! These are even hard words to accept- that my church connections are more lasting than my own family? Yes- it is true! Your identity as a child of God- a brother or sister to Christ and a fellow brother or sister to fellow church members- is eternal! Any biological link- parent/child/ spouse- these are all passing! But what a privilege- to call Jesus our brother and His Father our Father! We need to constantly remind ourselves of this truth- to not chose family over faith. Our spiritual union with Christ and each other must be our foremost interest! Not our skin color or social rank- not our national heritage- This truth is higher than any man dares to invent- that we can call the anointed Messiah our brother- that He would call us His family! But such is the privilege we share! The right to be called children of God- brothers of Christ- is a right given us by Christ! Because of His atoning work- giving His life for us- we are now the family of God! Jesus is to be closer to you than any family or friend- He is your brother!

II. The Submissive Requirement

So far, Jesus has established that His family is not first and foremost Mary and his earthly brothers- but rather His spiritual kinship is central to Him. But as Jesus continues- this spiritual kinship will be evident in their lives. By their fruit you know the tree! By their hearing and obeying the Word, you will know

who are the brothers and sisters of Christ! Now here again we see the connection between the previous parable and these words- take heed how you hear! Hear the Word- and obey! The good soil that takes the seed in and produces a fruit- these are the ones who are called the siblings of Jesus. Being a child of God- a sibling of Christ- will be seen! Just as our homes have household rules- so the family of God will be governed by a set of actions! So what are the commands of God- what does His Word command that we do? Well- we can summarize the Law by one word- Love! Love God above all and love your neighbor as yourself. Families are supposed to be governed by love! Love for God means that we will obey His decrees! Loving God means that we serve Him alone- worship Him as He desires- and use His name with awe and respect. Loving Him means obeying- So when the Word of God says- repent of your sins and believe in Jesus- we will do it! As John 6 says- this is the will of the Father- that whoever sees the Son and believes in Him- will not perish but has eternal life! We will place our faith in Jesus as the only source of forgiveness! When we see Jesus with the eyes of faith- we view Him rightly! When we are filled with His Spirit- we are one with Him and part of His family. So we will love Him! And we will love our neighbor- love and support our family of faith! Use our gifts and talents to encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ! This means speaking kindly to them and about them- speaking the words of light as we saw last week! Even in the church which is supposed to be family of faith- you can find grumbling and complaining about others. Harsh words and unkind actions. But let us love as brothers and sisters! And even with our enemies- letting Christ's gospel light be seen- revealing the greatness of Christ to all God puts in our path! So doing God's Word means obeying- loving God and our fellow man. The fact is- we are saved for service! Jesus makes us His siblings by His Spirit to conform us- so we start to act like He does! Since He is the Christ- the perfect, only begotten Son of God- we who are adopted by His grace are now called- even enabled to live as children of our Father and siblings of our Lord Jesus!

To conclude, most kids like to say great things about their family. My brother is bigger than you brother- my dad stronger than yours- we take pride in our families- but are we proud of our spiritual family? Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers! Later on- we do know that Jesus' earthly brothers did finally believe- the books of James and Jude were written by Jesus' brothers. But this fact does not cause them to boast- no after his brothers believed in Jesus- they referred to themselves as the servants or slaves of Jesus. Even as a follower of Christ- being a biological sibling did not give them a leg up in the Kingdom. As James and John needed to learn- the first will be last and the last first! As Jesus says in Mt. 23:8 to his disciples- you are all brothers. We are all the brothers and sisters of Christ- equal before Him and each dearly loved! In our text, Jesus is revealing the identity of His family. Not biology but faith is the mark of His loved ones. We are always in danger of choosing flesh and blood ties over faith- but Jesus reorients us to the truth- those united to Christ by faith are siblings in Christ! As Rom. 8:29 says- we are predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers! Jesus is the first- by His work we are made children of God – and by His Spirit we are conformed to the image of our elder brother Jesus!