

JESUS' TRUE FAMILY

Mark 3:21-35

Key Verse: 3:35

“Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.”

There are three events recorded in this passage. First, Jesus is accused of being out of his mind. Second, Jesus warns those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit. Third, Jesus teaches about his true family. I pray that God may help us to have ears to hear as we study this passage.

I. CRAZY FOR THE WORK OF GOD (20-21)

Look at verses 20-21. *Then Jesus entered a house, 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.”* After calling his twelve apostles on a mountain, Jesus came down to Capernaum and entered a house. Again a large crowd gathered around Jesus asking for his attention. Each one of these people had an urgent problem to bring to Jesus. Some of them had serious physical sicknesses. They had heard how Jesus healed a paralytic, a leper, a man with a shriveled hand, and many others, and they came to him hoping he would heal them. Some had stomach ulcers, some had migraine headaches, and some had athletes' feet. Other people had mental issues such as depression, bipolar disease, and sudden anxiety attacks. Others had demon possession problems. Each person thought he or she had the most urgent case. So they came to Jesus and tried to touch him. Jesus took care of each person with his compassionate heart. It took several hours for him to counsel people with severe mental problems. He did not have mass healing sessions. He took care of them each one. He ended up skipping many meals. His disciples hated this, but to Jesus helping the people was more important than his meals. This was the beautiful picture of a true shepherd. However, some people thought that he was crazy to skip meals in order to help the people in the gutter. Who said Jesus was out of his mind? It was none other than his own family members.

Look at verse 21. *When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.”* Most likely it was the half-brothers of Jesus who said that Jesus was out of his mind. Jesus had several brothers including James, Joses (or Joseph), Simon and Judas (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3) and some sisters. At the beginning of his ministry, these brothers of Jesus did not believe in him (Jn 7:5). When Jesus became popular because of the many miracles he was performing, his brothers told Jesus to go to Jerusalem and show himself to the world what kinds of miracles he could do. They wanted him to be a famous healer so that they could be the brothers of a famous doctor. They did not understand the purpose of Jesus' life and mission on earth.

When the brothers heard about how Jesus was taking care of many sick people and did not even charge a dime for his service, they thought he was crazy. When they heard about how Jesus was skipping many meals because of the crowds of people coming to him, they said he was out of his mind. Jesus who was their oldest brother used to work

diligently in their carpentry shop and helped the family with their finance. Now he was doing many nice things to strangers for nothing in return. He was working hard everyday but did not bring home the bacon. To them, Jesus was not normal. They thought that he had gone “over the edge” as a religious fanatic. Jesus was crazy for God’s work.

When I decided to follow Jesus as his disciple, my family members said I was crazy. To many people today, our UBF members may seem a little crazy as we spend so much time studying the word of God, writing testimonies, praying for not only self but also for others, and attending several meetings a week. Chris gets up early every morning to start the day by praying and eating daily bread. He drives 40 minutes each way, three times a week, to attend our fellowship meetings. On weekends, he does not go around to hang out with some cute girls or to drink beer, as he used to. Instead, he studies the Bible and prays. To some of his old friends, Chris has gone crazy. He is crazy for Jesus.

Actually, people in our society are crazy for something or someone. Some are crazy for sports. Some people are willing to sit in a stadium seat for hours in a freezing temperature. I don’t think they would sit through a three-hour sermon at a church without complaining. Some people are crazy for video games. Some people are crazy for Hollywood celebrity. They would pay money on Ebay to buy a tissue used by their favorite actor. These people are not ashamed of their indulgence on these questionable objects.

St. Paul was also accused of being crazy for Jesus. The Roman governor Festus heard Paul’s personal testimony about meeting the Risen Christ, he interrupted Paul to shout, “You are out of your mind, Paul! Your great learning is driving you insane” (Ac 26:25). Paul responded to him by saying that he wished everyone listening to him become like himself, except for the chains (Ac 26:29). He was telling them to be crazy for Jesus like him, because that is the only thing that is truly worthy to be crazy for. Seeking first God’s kingdom and his righteousness may seem a crazy thing to do in this world where many people live only for themselves. But that is exactly what Jesus told us to do. What appears crazy in people’s eyes is perfectly normal in God’s eyes. In the end, only what God says about us will matter, not what people say about us. Our life in this world is only a preparation for the life in the kingdom of God. So if we want to be crazy for someone or something, we should be crazy for Jesus and for the salvation work of God.

II. BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT (22-30)

Look at verse 22. *And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.”* The accusation of the teachers of the law was much more sinister. They had come down from Jerusalem to gather information about Jesus because everyone in the country was talking about his wonderful work. They saw with their own eyes how Jesus healed a man with a shriveled hand and helped him to start a new life. But they wrote on their report only that Jesus violated the law by healing him on Sabbath. They saw how Jesus drove out demons from many people. They saw how the people were now free of the evil spirits. The evidence was undeniable. But they refused to praise God. They wanted to discredit the work of God done by Jesus because they were jealous of him. They accused Jesus for driving out demons by the help of the prince of demons. They accused the Son of God of

demon-possession (22,30). The teachers of the law were evil. They saw the truth, but denied the truth.

This was a very serious accusation. What did Jesus say to them? Look at verses 23-25. *So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come.* First, Jesus explained patiently how their accusation did not make any sense. Then he gave a stern warning for their evil accusation.

Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables. He asked, "How can Satan drive out Satan?" Why would Satan drive out his own agent from his victim? It does not make sense. A king would not do things on purpose that will bring down his kingdom. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. If Satan opposes himself and is divided, his end has come. Then Jesus told them a parable. He said in verses 26-27: *"In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house."* The strong man in this parable is Jesus himself. Jesus came to defeat Satan. Although God permits Satan to work in our world, God is still in control. And one day Satan will be bound forever (Rev 20:10).

What was the grave warning Jesus issued to the teachers of the law? Look at verses 28-29. *"I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin."* This warning scares a lot of people, even some Christians. But the unforgivable sin that Jesus mentions here is not the kind of sins that we accidentally commit in our life. Jesus died once and for all for the sins that we committed in the past, in the present and even in the future. What we learn is that we should not deliberately and persistently go against God and deny the work of the Holy Spirit. After all, those who deliberately and persistently deny the work of God would not accept Jesus as their personal Savior.

III. TRUE FAMILY OF JESUS (30-35)

While Jesus was teaching about the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call Jesus to come out (31). Jesus' human brothers had concluded that he was out of his mind and apparently urged their mother Mary to come and take charge of Jesus. They intended to take Jesus home and make him do "normal" things, rather than taking care of lowly people day in and day out and hanging out with 12 weird-looking guys all the time. They wanted to take him home so that he could eat three meals a day at regular mealtime.

Look at verses 32-35. *A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you." "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."* I think those who were with Jesus were surprised by his reply. When the messenger said, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you," it was natural for

Jesus to go out and welcome his family. But Jesus asked, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” Then Jesus taught them about a different kind of family, one that is not based on blood but on faith. Jesus taught them about spiritual family.

In the course of our lives, we come in contact with many different people. We establish relationship with other people based on our schools, our neighborhoods, our work places, and so on. In college, some of us join fraternities or clubs. Michael has some friends from far away countries through his online gaming community. But the strongest human bond is found in our families. There is a saying “Blood is thicker than water.” We turn to our family members in times of good and bad. We are bonded with our family throughout our life time. Our family can have an impact on our spiritual life. I said earlier that my family members tried to discourage me from following Jesus with a full commitment. I have known some young people who could not commit their lives to Christ because of the pressure from their family members. Especially in our society where there are so many broken families, family ties seem so important.

However, what Jesus says in this passage puts our family values in a different perspective. Jesus looked around the people who followed him and said, *“Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.”* Jesus defines family here not based on human blood but on the blood of the Messiah. We who believe in Jesus as our personal Savior are brothers and sisters who are born again in Christ by the blood of Jesus shed on the cross. God is our Father and we are his children (Jn 1:13). God saved us through the sacrifice of his one and only Son and adopted us into his family. Let us think about Jesus’ family values here in more detail.

First, Jesus’ family is universal and eternal. Our God is the Creator of the heavens and earth (Ge 1:1). He created all things in the universe. He created human beings in his own image. He is the Creator God of all peoples of the world. So his family includes all kinds of people with different skin colors, hair colors and eye colors. It includes the old and the young, and the rich and the poor. Anyone and everyone who accepts Jesus as the personal Savior is adopted into this family. The Israelis, the Palestinians, the Somalis, the Afghans, ... can all come together in this family of God.

In addition, Jesus’ family is eternal. We have to say goodbye to our human family members when we die. This happens sooner or later to everyone. Even before death do us part, some of us are estranged from our family members because of our pride or jealousy. However, Jesus’ family is eternal. This family relationship will continue in the eternal kingdom of God.

Second, Jesus’ family has a spiritual value system. Jesus valued his spiritual family more highly than his own brothers. A truly spiritual person would put God’s family ahead of his own. He or she would put God’s work ahead of his or her own. He or she would love God’s people even more than his or her own family. Jesus loved his disciples even more than his own brothers. Now, this does not mean we should neglect our family or sever our ties with them. On the contrary, Jesus was a good son to his mother. He took care of his mother and brothers, working hard in the family business until he was 30 years old. And he showed his concern for his mother even as he was hanging on the cross and bleeding.

He told his disciple John, "Here is your mother," and from that time on, John took Mary into his home (Jn 19:27). Because of Jesus' spiritual influence on his brothers, they eventually became believers as well. Among them, James became a leader in the Jerusalem church in the first century (Ac 15:13). We learn from Jesus that we can truly love our human family members when we help them spiritually and bring them into God's family.

We learned today that we are brothers and sisters in Christ. We have been adopted into God's family when we accepted Jesus as our personal Savior. As such, we should love one another deeply, even more so than our own family members. We are the family that is eternal and universal. We also learned that we should love our human family members by bringing them into God's family. That is the best love we can show for our family. May God help us to be a family of believers who love Jesus and love one another deeply!