The Servant’s Family
Mark 3:31-35

Introduction

What do you think about when you hear the word “family” or “my family”? What makes a family? What constitutes family ties?

In this chapter of Mark’s gospel we have witnessed the courage of Jesus (vv.1-6) as Jesus heals a man with a withered hand. The miracle generates both wonder and malice as the religious leaders—the Scribes—the Pharisees and the Herodians all plot together to get rid of Jesus. We have witnessed the compassion of Jesus (vv.7-12); as he restores the sick and releases those who were under demonic and satanic oppression (vv.7-12); we saw the call of Jesus to those who would become apostles (vv.13-19); and the explosion of criticism from foes and families (vv. 20-30). At the end of this chapter Jesus will bring in some much needed clarification; the family of Jesus have come looking for Him. All the curiosity and drama and animosity have brought the family of Jesus to see Him.

True kinship is found in a common experience; a common interest; and a common obedience and a common goal.

George Barna said, “Family is certainly not dead in America, but it looks and behaves very differently than it used to.”

The Servant’s Family (vv.31-32)

(NKJV) 31 Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him.

Don’t forget the reason His brothers and His mother came; (v.21) “But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, “He is out of His mind”. The family of Jesus have come to take Him home! We may surmise that the family of Jesus had been in Nazareth but now they are in Capernaum. What rumors had reached His mother and His family? Now the family are on the edge of the crowd. They are “calling Him”. Can you hear them? “Jesus! Jesus! It’s your mother! Let us through. We are His family! We know what’s best for him”.

Don’t forget the miracles. Don’t forget the statements Jesus has already made. Reports had gotten to them that Jesus wasn’t eating; religious leaders and perhaps some in the crowd sensed or at least accused Jesus of being crazy; “he is beside himself” (Mark 3:21). It may be the family were rightly and deeply concerned; the religious leaders left many hints they were willing to have Jesus killed! Had they overheard the accusations that Jesus was possessed by a demon or even Satan?

In John’s Gospel we are told “For even His brothers did not believe in Him” (John 7:5).
Most people are familiar with the fact that Jesus had a mother named Mary. Mary’s husband was named Joseph. Whatever happened to Joseph is a bit of a mystery. Joseph is conspicuous by his absence. The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches teach that Mary remained a virgin or what has been called the real and perpetual virginity of Mary. The Roman Catholic Church offers the argument the brothers and sisters mentioned in the New Testament are cousins or close relatives or perhaps siblings from a first marriage of Joseph. But the explanation is not convincing—at least to me.

The Bible teaches that Jesus was Mary’s firstborn but she gave birth to other sons and daughters (see Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; John 2:12; 7:3,5,10; Acts 1:14; 1 Corinthians 9:5; Galatians 1:19).

(NKJV) 32And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, “Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You.”

The multitude relays the message; “Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You”.

This is the only mention of Mary in Mark’s gospel. The family are on the outside trying to get in.

Obedience Is Thicker Than Water (v.33)

33But He answered them, saying, “Who is My mother, or My brothers?”

This is one of those rare moments when Jesus contrasts and compares His earthly (flesh and blood) family with His spiritual family. Some have suggested that Jesus is downgrading or declaring human ties, blood relatives, family to be irrelevant. But I don’t think that is true. Clearly Jesus demonstrates love and care for His family throughout His ministry. You have heard the expression that blood is thicker than water—and so it is. But there is something even thicker—our kinship or relationship in Christ and in God. The question Jesus asks does not give us permission to neglect or ignore or abuse our family.

Clearly Jesus expresses concern for His family and mother (John 19:26-27). The Lord inspired Paul to write Ephesians 5:22-6:3-4. The half-brothers of Jesus--James and Jude would eventually become leaders in the Church and write their respective epistles.

What makes a family a genuine family? Jesus will use this opportunity to teach some much needed lessons. The lessons include what does it mean to have a biblical view of Mary? What should we do when our family misunderstands us or our ministry? In what way do spiritual relationships take precedence over natural relationships?
Kinship In The Kingdom (vv.34-35)

(NKJV) Mark 3:34 And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, ‘Here are My mother and My brothers!’

I want to draw your attention to the phrase “And He looked around” . The Greek participle is periblepsamentos (as in verse 5); where it speaks of that momentary flash of anger as Jesus looks around the room at the hardness of hearts of the religious leaders. Once again Jesus moves from eye to eye around the circle where He is sitting. In a circle “cyclo” (those seated in a circle around him). Who was sitting in that circle? His disciples? The people who were near to Jesus, next to Jesus, clearly wanted to be with Jesus and listen to Him.

Who was in that circle? Clearly the disciples who believe Jesus and follow Jesus. Who else? Is it possible some curious tax collectors were there? Is it possible some interested sinners were there looking for love and mercy? Is it possible some of the crowd were drawn from the multitudes looking for healing and help? Is it even possible that some self righteous scribes and Pharisees had pushed long and hard to get a closer look at Jesus?

We know a group of the religious leaders had no intention of ever following Jesus. The immediate flesh and blood family of Jesus are simply not there! Why aren’t they there? The brothers don’t believe in Jesus as Lord (John 7:5). Clearly they “believe” in Jesus in the sense that he exists. Clearly they share a common experience; even if you don’t believe or accept the Bible’s testimony that Mary did not remain a virgin in perpetuity you must concede they grew up with the same mother, the same village, the same language, culture, intimate family experiences. The family aren’t enemies of Jesus. Clearly they spent time with Jesus. Clearly they do not understand Him or submit to His authority.

What do they want to do with Jesus? They want to take Him home! In what sense? In the sense that a crazy family member is out of control and is very likely to get himself killed if he doesn’t stop going around healing the sick, delivering the demon possessed and raising the dead and antagonizing the religious establishment! The family wants to pacify Jesus, tame Jesus, make Jesus act like a normal first century Jew; to stop all this nonsense about being the Messiah! The family want Jesus to act rationally and reasonably; they want to control Jesus; and the family gets to decide what constitutes what is reasonable and respectable.

How is it possible that the family could be so close to Jesus, so familiar and intimate in the details of His life--and not know Him or believe Him?

They want Jesus to be safe and normal. Why? Because the other is too hard. What other? To believe Him. What do you mean? The family of Jesus had to believe they were sinners in need of a Savior.

The family of Jesus were calling him! But Jesus was calling them!
The religious leaders think Jesus is dangerous. So dangerous he must die.
The multitude think Jesus is a prophet, a miracle worker, a religious entitlement program.
The tax collectors and sinners think he is a pal, a buddy, a friend.
The disciples think Jesus is the Messiah.
The brothers and sisters and perhaps even His mother thinks something is terribly wrong with Him!

What about you? What do you think? Do you see Jesus and religion as a convenient way to meet moral people? Do you see Jesus as a better alternative to radical Islam, or the mysticism of Buddhism, or the rigid requirements of works based man made religion? Do you see Jesus as some moral obligation or religious duty because of the threat of hell? Do you see Jesus as a gravy train or miracle worker who exists to fix your problems? What do you think? Is Jesus the great and cosmic Judge in the sky waiting for you to make a mistake, like Santa keeping a record of good deeds and bad deeds--waiting for any excuse to toss you into Hell? Is Jesus your good buddy who loves to fish, smoke a good cigar, have a brewski and talk conservative politics with? Or is Jesus the liberal social justice enthusiast who motivates you to join every cause and embrace every movement but you never find time just for Him?

Or is Jesus the Son of God and Savior, the Lord to whom you have sworn allegiance; given full surrender; or is He like a religious time share; you love Him and serve Him on the weekends; but all the rest of your life and leisure time are devoted to the daily grind of what you consider normal living?

The religious leaders hate Jesus. The religious leaders love religion—the religious leaders love control! Power and control provides a smug sense of security and approval. Religion is deeply comfortable and personally valuable! The problem—their religion does not include Jesus as the solution to personal sin and access to God.
The religious leaders were filled with pride and false approval!
The family of Jesus do not understand Him or submit to His authority!
The multitudes love the food, the healing, the deliverance, the assistance that Jesus gives; but are willing to move on when commitment or sacrifice are demanded.

The tax collectors and sinners see mercy and love; Jesus said he was more than happy to give them mercy and love! Jesus is more than happy to be the Savior who saves us from our sin. Jesus is the answer to our greatest need. The disciples see Jesus as God’s promised Messiah. The disciples and apostles want to be with Him, learn from Him, receive grace and mercy from Him, be empowered by Him, guided by Him, work with Him, live for Him, be under Christ’s command!

Jesus is willing to redefine relations in a radical new way!

(NKJV) Mark 3:35 For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.”
What is the will of God and how do we do it?

“Well, here’s the answer true; The nearest thing, that should be done,
That he can do--through you!” (E.C. Baird).

John 6:29; 28 Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?”
29 Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He
sent.”

Jonathan Edwards is sometimes called the last Puritan. He wrote; “Earthly fathers and mothers,
husbands, wives, children and earthly friends, are all “shadows.” But God is the “substance.”

Who has access to Jesus?

Physical relationship does not provide access to Jesus! The relationship that counts, the
relationship that matters is obedience to God! Our kinship and our relationship is based on our
spiritual understanding of God and our willingness to do the will of God. God is a Spirit and
must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. True friendship and fellowship--kinship in the
kingdom--is based on being a follower of Jesus and you cannot follow God unless you are in
spiritual union with God through Christ.

John 1:12-13; But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of
God, to those who believe in His name: (v.13) who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the
flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Our kinship is based on knowing and doing the will of God. Jesus gave Himself over to His
Father’s will. The disciples and apostles of Jesus had accepted Jesus as their Lord and Master.
Granted--they were new in their companionship with Jesus--but they were following Jesus.
The Word of God and the Will of God became the driving forces in their lives.
Does the Word of God and the will of God stand first in your life?

Jesus makes it clear that doing the will of God generates more credit that a flesh and blood tie.
The lesson is clear, Jesus puts God’s interests ahead of family interests.

“If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and
brethren, and sisters, yes his own life also, he cannot be disciple” (see Matt.10:37).

We are bound by cords stronger than genes, culture, and language to Christ and to our brothers
and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ. You may have experienced the sweet friendship and
fellowship that comes from knowing and loving the Savior. We have a mutual love for and
commitment to Jesus. Those feelings and sympathies and mutual understandings and desire to
do God’s will generate strong cords.
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Flesh and blood family who have no knowledge of Jesus, no love for Jesus, no interest in following or serving Jesus, no interest in knowing or doing the will of God seem strange and distant to us. That does not mean we have no affection, or responsibilities towards our family. We also understand how our family may bitterly resent our loyalties to Christ.

Jesus warned us in Matthew 10:34; “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. (v.35) “For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother in law’; (v.36) “and a man’s enemies will be those of his own household’.”

There are times when the claims of Jesus and the commands of Jesus and the demands of Jesus will take precedence over the claims of family, the commands of family and the demands of family.

**Christians are forced to make difficult and painful decisions. We must do the will of God which is far more important than to conform to the earthly requirements of family and friends.** In Luke’s Gospel we have this strange outburst; “And it happened, as he spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!” (v.28) But He said, “More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Luke 11:27-28).

The nation of Israel and the people of Israel claimed relationship with God through the covenants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The nation claimed Messiah by virtue of blood descent.

Jesus is making a remarkable statement. Blood ties do not make spiritual relationships. The only ones Jesus would accept are those who are related to Him by faith! In that multitude there were those who made claim to God by virtue of the fact that they were direct descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! Being Jewish was an acceptable basis for being accepted and admitted into the Kingdom of God (in their wrong thinking). But Jesus makes it clear that the Kingdom must be entered by faith in Him, and trust in Him, not by the accident of birth!

**Conclusion**

The will of God is not defined in terms of “what is the best thing for me?” or “what will bring me happiness”. In the Bible “the will of God” is used in at least three different ways. God’s sovereign will--which is His eternal, abiding, sometimes secret or unrevealed strategy. God’s moral will--which are commands that are revealed in the Bible--that teach us those things we must believe and give us principles for living. We might even think of God’s individual will--that is an ideal, God honoring plan. In Jeremiah 29:11 we read, “For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.” Yes the immediate context is concerning the southern Kingdom of Judea and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. But I think the principle is true of all those are a part of God’s forever family! In the text of Jeremiah we read “to give you a future and a hope” --God is the giver.
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In Psalm 37:23 we read “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. . .” (Psalm 37:23). We might think of each step as the way and the day in which we live. God has ordered your steps. In the Wizard of Oz--Dorothy had to follow the yellow brick road!

Our road is laid out in in the Bible. In Proverbs 16:9 we read “A man’s heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps”! There are times we make plans, we take steps, we test options; but God will guide those steps. In Proverbs 1:33 we read, “But whoever listens to me will dwell safely, and be secure, without fear of evil”. Pay attention to the words “listens to me”. Be open to hearing His voice. Be open to read His Word and receive instructions; He leads, You follow. Protection--security--stability. Many Christians go from crisis to crisis; catastrophe to catastrophe, one dire circumstance after the other--all because they stop listening to God; stop reading their Bible; hinder and grieve The Holy Spirit. But you can trust the Lord. You need not lean to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:5). The Psalmist wrote; “For this is God, our God forever and ever; He will be our guide even to death” (Psalm 48:14).

The Bible encourages us to pray for “knowledge of His will” (Col.1:9-10).
The Bible exhorts us to “prove” what is God’s acceptable will (Rom. 12:1-2)
The Bible promises us that God will “direct the paths” of those who trust Him (Prov.3:5-6).
The Bible provides direction for the right way (Isa. 30:21).
The Bible gives a promise of instruction and counsel “in the way you should go” (Psalm 32:8).
The Bible tells the direction looks like “good works” (Ephesians 2:10).