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 Date: June 1, 2008
 Title: "Who are My mother and My brothers"
 Text: Mark 3:31-35 (Gospel parallels - Matthew 12:46-50; Luke 8:19-21)
 Theme: The characteristics of God's family (3:31-35). Jesus shows how His true family is His disciples. His disciples are those who listen to Him and do the will of God by embracing the gospel He preaches.

THE BIG PICTURE

Second Cycle - Later Galilean Ministry (3:13 – 6:29)

- The choosing of the 12 apostles (3:13-19)
- Beginning of THE BUSY DAY (3:20-5:20)
- The charge of demonic activity (3:20-30)
 - The characteristics of God's family (3:31-35)
 - The clarifying of His kingdom (4:1-34)
 - The parable of the soils (4:1-20)
 - The parable of the lamp (vv. 21-25)
 - The parable of the seed (vv. 26-29)
 - The parable of the mustard seed (vv. 30-34)

Introduction:

Remember the previous paragraph. Jesus notes how those who are for Him are a part of His kingdom. Those who are against Him have committed an unpardonable sin. The issue in our present paragraph is not whether you are in His immediate family by physical descent, but if you are born again and have pledged your allegiance to King Jesus.

There is an intentional arranging of material by Mark. In verses 20 and 21 His family is noted. Now in verses 31-35 the same group is reintroduced into the narrative.

The Matthew account (12:49) says that Jesus pointed to His disciples when He made the statement, "Here are my mother and my brothers!"

In an indirect manner our text addresses the inappropriate placement of Mary, His earthly mother, as to her importance by many within Christendom. Do we celebrate her life; absolutely, but there is nothing intrinsic to Mary that makes Mary any different than any of us. She was born of Adam's seed and needed a Savior. She, by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, became a child of God. Her only and sole merit before the Father is found simply in Jesus Christ. We should not read into this a direct slam against Mary, but rather the idea of comparison in that like Mary we too can become family by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Augustine correctly notes how, "Mary was more blessed in receiving the faith of Christ than in conceiving the flesh of Christ." (Augustine, "On Virginity" 3, in Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament II - Mark, 45).

“One's heart goes out to Mary who has to go back home without even seeing her wondrous Son. What did it all mean to her at this hour?” (A.T. Robertson's *Word Pictures of the New Testament* on Mark 3:34).

Although we find the statement naturally harsh, its impact on us is lessened because of our Western culture. In our culture, family units, if they get along at all, are never thinking about a family business or living close enough to one another as to have daily contact. In our Lord's culture, families were bound by business and geography. For our Lord to make the statement He did was scandalous.

“Loyalty to the family was the local and specific outworking of loyalty to Israel as the people of God. Break the link, and you've undermined a major pillar in the way Jews in the first century think and feel about the world and themselves. **Jesus was quite capable of challenging the symbols that lay at the heart of the Jewish sense of identity.**” ([emphasis added] Tom Wright, *Mark for Everyone*, 39).

How many of us in our present fellowship are closer to those of faith than we are to our own family? This is what Jesus references in our present text. What are the characteristics of God's family, of true kinship? I would suggest four characteristics that bind us together as the people of God. The passage gives us the context for the utterance and then it provides the answer to the question, “Who are My mother and My brothers?” Today's study will seek to answer the question.

Questions:

1. Who make up the true family of God?
2. Is the family of God entered by natural birth?
3. Is Jesus teaching a works salvation in His response?

To Know: The Holy Spirit desires for us to know How Jesus is our brother and we are a part of His family.

To Choose: The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose Jesus as our Savior and our King.

To Feel: The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of being a part of God's family.

The Eternal Value:

No one becomes a child of God by natural birth. You must be born-again. It is only as we are born-again, born from above, that we become a part of God's family. This is the issue that must be settled for each individual.

The Present Danger:

“Mark has here set up a picture of ‘those inside’ and ‘those outside’ which is going to be very important in the next chapter. The gospel, and allegiance to Jesus, produces a division, often an unexpected and unwelcome one, in every group or society where they make their way.” (Tom Wright, *Mark for Everyone*, 40).

Let us not forget what we saw in our previous paragraph, “There is no middle ground in the kingdom of God. You are either in or out, you are either for Him or against Him, but you are never both.” This issue is not resolved by natural descent, but by new birth.

The Storyline:

“He slices through the whole traditional structure in one clean cut. He has a different vocation, a different mission, and it involves breaking hallowed family ties. God is doing the unthinkable: he is starting a new family, a new holy people, and is doing so without regard for ordinary human family bonds. Unless you read verses 34 and 35 as deeply shocking, you haven’t got the message.” (Tom Wright, *Mark for Everyone*, 40).

Our story is very pointed and, when put into its historical/cultural context, pungent. The statement by the family provides a platform for our Lord to address the issue as to who is part of His family. The story begins by setting the scene.

I. The scene (v. 31)

We will assume a sequence of events in so far that this event follows immediately on the heels of the preceding ideas. His family continue to recognize the demands that are place on Him and the work in which He is engaged. Whether or not there is support for what He is doing is questionable. Their expressions regardless of motive break Him from what He is doing. There can be little doubt that He is preaching the gospel, healing the sick, and casting out demons. Jesus is not ready to break from what He is doing and uses the occasion to drive home a very strong point.

A.T. Robertson notes how this is a, “Pathetic picture of the mother and brothers standing on the outside of the house thinking that Jesus inside is beside himself and wanting to take him home.” (A.T. *Robertson’s Word Pictures of the New Testament* on Mark 3:31).

There is a “new wine” present and it will not fit into an “old wineskin” way of thinking. The stronger one has arrived and He is overthrowing the present ruler. Jesus is bringing in a new kingdom and everyone present needs to listen up.

Verse 34 describes the scene as informal. ““Those seated in a circle around him’ is what the Greek says.” (Ralph Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament*, 35).

II. The statement (v. 32 [“Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You.”])

III. The question (v. 33 [“Who are My mother and My brothers?”])

IV. The answer (vv. 34, 35)

It will be safe for us to assume that there is tenderness to His communication. It is in stark contrast to verse 28.

“[It] is not intended as a repudiation of them. The words do imply His disappointment at their lack of sympathy for His work, and suggest that they were not qualified to direct His activities. The question was intended to call attention to the fact that, in His work, there were ties that were higher than those of flesh and blood.” (D. Edmond Hiebert, *Mark: A Portrait of the Servant*, 96).

“It is a great comfort to all true Christians, that they are dearer to Christ than mother, brother, or sister as such, merely as relations in the flesh would have been, even had they been holy.” (*Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary* on Mark 3:31)

This same idea carries over from His choice of the twelve. He, in a sense, placed them above His “family tree.”

“Jesus admits three human relationships—‘brother, sister, mother’--but omits the paternal relationship, since he had no Father, save God.” (*The Fourfold Gospel* on Mark 3:35). “Jesus did not add ‘and father,’ for in the realm of the spiritual, that term marked a position which no human being could fill. Jesus always used the term *Father* of the heavenly Father.” ([emphasis his] D. Edmond Hiebert, *Mark: A Portrait of the Servant*, 96).

William Burkitt makes the following insightful comment:

“How exceedingly dear obedient Christians are to Jesus Christ; he prefers his spiritual kindred before his natural. **Alliance by faith is more valued by our Savior than alliance by blood. To bear Christ in the heart is a greater honor than to bear him in the womb. Verily, spiritual regeneration brings men into a more honorable relation to Christ than natural generation ever did.**” ([emphasis added] *William Burkitt’s Notes on the New Testament* on Mark 3:31).

William Barclay in commenting on this passage provides four characteristics of true kinship. I would not believe this is exhaustive, but I do think it is suggestive. (William Barclay, *Mark*, 82, 83).

a. True kinship lies in a common experience

“The basis of true kinship lies in a common experience, and Christians have the common experience of being forgiven sinners.” (William Barclay, *Mark*, 82). Those who are closest to me are those who have been bought by blood not those with whom I share a natural heritage. “The spiritual family is larger than the biological family.” (1599 Geneva Bible Notes on Mark 3:34).

“Not a profession of discipleship but active obedience established the relationship.” (D. Edmond Hiebert, *Mark: A Portrait of the Servant*, 96).

b. True kinship lies in a common interest

Experience shows us the validity of such thinking. Those with whom we are the closest are those with whom we share common interests. That which binds us together as a fellowship is our interest in who God is, what He has done, and who we are in Him.

c. True kinship lies in a common obedience

We noted in our last study the mixed group of people Jesus called to be His twelve apostles. On one hand you have Matthew the tax-collector and on the other you have Simon the zealot. Although significantly different in their personalities, they were bound together by their common obedience. They loved Christ.

“Any platoon of soldiers will be made up of [individuals] from different backgrounds and from different walks of life and holding very different opinions; yet, if they are long enough together, they will be welded into a band of comrades because of the common obedience which they all share. [We] can love each other only when [we] all love Jesus Christ.” (William Barclay, Mark, 83).

Is Jesus teaching a works based salvation by His response? The Gospels always show an unbreakable link between the heart and the hand. The link between the mouth and the heart is indissoluble. Salt water cannot produce fresh water and apple trees do not produce pears. Thus, one’s work can testify to the new birth. As we will note in 4:1ff, good soil produces fruit; bad soil does not.

d. True kinship lies in a common goal

“If kinship comes from a common goal then Christians above all men possess its secret, for all are seeking to know Christ better and to bring others within his Kingdom. Wherever else we differ, on that we can agree.” (William Barclay, Mark, 83).

Because we forget these things, we have a tendency to divide over the non-essential. From the church’s past we have rightfully noted how. . .

“In essentials, unity; in doubtful matters, liberty; in all things, charity.”- Author Unknown.

Let us make much of Christ and Him crucified. May Christ continue to be our unifying object.

APPLICATION: (What’s the NEXT STEP?)

1. Perhaps today you believe you have entered the family of God in a way different than by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Today I pray your thinking has been corrected.
2. As a part of God’s family, how readily are you identified by it? Do people know from your life that you are a Christian, a follower of the Lamb?
3. Everyday we should thank God for including us in His family by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.