

Being in the Family

Mark 3: 31-35

Our text today reveals an encounter that was difficult for many to accept. Very likely the intentions of our Lord were misunderstood and misrepresented. Even today, as we consider these verses, this passage remains difficult for many to comprehend and accept.

As with any passage of Scripture we examine, context is always key. We must always consider a passage within its context if we are to properly discern its true meaning. Bear in mind the setting for these verses. Jesus has faced continual opposition from the scribes and Pharisees. They were determined to follow Him everywhere He went, seeking any means of accusation through which they could justify their condemnation. We also discovered a few weeks ago that this skepticism was not isolated among the Pharisees alone. Unfortunately, even His family and friends, His *kinsman*, were skeptical of Jesus, [V.21](#).

I would like to take a moment to describe the setting for the passage before we get into the great lessons Jesus taught on this occasion. The Lord had been accused of working through the power of Satan by the Pharisees, immediately following an attempt by His family to bring Him home. It is apparent that His family believed Jesus had lost His mind and needed to come home to avoid further embarrassment. Following these unsettling encounters, we find Jesus continuing to teach the people. I can imagine some who were eager to learn of Him seated as close to the Lord as they possibly could. Likely a bit further back are some who are somewhat skeptical, but yet curious about this man. No doubt the Pharisees are there, looming in background, always close enough to hear what Jesus says. No doubt the crowd was rather large, and Jesus is surrounded by a multitude of people. Somewhere on the fringes of the crowd, the family of Jesus had come, apparently in a further attempt to convince Him to come home. It is important to keep all this in mind as we move through these challenging verses.

Let's take a few moments to discuss the [lessons](#) revealed in the text as we consider the thought: [Being in the Family](#).

I. The Request of the Family (31-32) – As the scene opens, we find the family of Jesus offering a request. Consider:

A. The Communication (31) – [There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him.](#) As Jesus taught the crowd that day, His family had gathered somewhere near the back of the multitude. They were standing without. It is possible they stood close enough to hear His voice, but maybe were unable to see Jesus. I can imagine Jesus seeing someone

near the back of the crowd leaning back, listening to someone behind them whispering in their ear. After a brief moment, that person taps someone on the shoulder seated in front of him and shares what he had just heard. Slowly the message makes its way to the front of the gathering. The family of Jesus, His brothers and His mother, were standing on the fringe of the crowd, calling for Jesus to come unto them.

B. The Expectation (32) – *And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.* As the message made its way to the front of the crowd, the people began to tell Jesus that His mother and brothers were waiting beyond the crowd, seeking for Jesus to come unto them.

- So far we have discussed nothing that is difficult to understand or embrace. As Jesus taught the people, His family came desiring to see Him. Their request was made known to Jesus in a public manner as He was teaching. As the people conveyed the message, they fully expected Jesus to stop what He was doing, and immediately go to His family. Those present that day would have understood the need. Family was considered to be the most important aspect within society. They fully expected the Lord to abandon whatever He was currently engaged in if a need arose within the family.

- While this is not the focus of the passage, I do want to make a quick application. Our modern culture could learn a valuable lesson from the ancient Jews regarding commitment and devotion to family. We have developed a selfish atmosphere in America, where few are willing to sacrifice for the needs of the family. Mothers and fathers are often too quick to abandon their own children in pursuit of personal pleasures. Often parents are loved and visited as long as they have the ability to prepare meals or share their wealth, but when situations hinder the benefits, far too often they find themselves alone. We must appreciate and support our families!

II. The Response of the Lord (33-35) – Here we discover Jesus' response to the request of His family. I am certain it wasn't what the people or His family expected to hear. These verses continue to cause confusion and uncertainty. As I stated in the introduction, we must look at them in their context. They actually provide clear, biblical instruction for believers. Consider:

A. Jesus' Question (33) – *And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren?* Rather than going to attend to their request, Jesus offered a perplexing question. He wanted the people to consider who His family was. No doubt many of them were familiar with Mary and the brothers of Jesus, but that was not the response He was looking for. Jesus asked a question that had spiritual implications. He was not referring solely to His physical family. No doubt the family was

not expecting this response. I can imagine Mary was disappointed and His brothers were probably angered by His response. Like the multitude, they expected Jesus to respond immediately to their request. However, Jesus knew their intentions. They sought to convince Him to abandon the work He was currently pursuing. At this point, they did not believe He was the Christ. [John 7:5 – For neither did his brethren believe in him.](#)

- Jesus came to do the will of His heavenly Father. He came to provide redemption for humanity. He was in the process of preparing the disciples to continue the work following His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. While Jesus was not unconcerned with the immediate need of His family, He was determined to fulfill redemption's plan, even if His family failed to understand or appreciate His efforts!

- There is a great spiritual lesson we all need to understand from this question of our Lord. While He would never advocate neglect or abuse of our families, He does want us to understand the supremacy of a relationship with Him. His desire to please the Father exceeded His desire to appease His brothers. While we must support and love our families, we must never allow devotion to our families to come between us and our relationship with Christ. This is difficult at times, but it is expected of those who belong to Christ. Our commitment to the Lord, and serving Him, must exceed our devotion to family. Many have been forced to choose between serving the Lord and their families. Some family members will not understand or appreciate the sacrifices necessary to serve the Lord. Some are not believers and fail to understand our commitment to Christ. No doubt we all have someone within our families living in sin, contrary to the Word. We cannot compromise our faith or abandon our service in an effort to appease certain family members. [Luke 14:26-27 – If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.](#) ^[27] [And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.](#)

B. Jesus' Declaration (34) – [And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!](#) No doubt this too shocked those seated around Jesus and His family as well. Referring to those seated around Him, who believed He was in fact the Christ, Jesus declared – Behold my mother and my brethren! Clearly He was referring to His spiritual family, not the brothers born unto Mary and Joseph. Jesus emphasized those who followed Him, those who had a personal relationship with Him, were in fact His family.

- While this is difficult for some to accept, it is true nonetheless. We are all born into a physical family. I had nothing to do with that. None of us had the privilege of picking or choosing our family. We are related to those within our families by birth, by blood. The same is true spiritually. We become part of the family of God through the new birth, being cleansed in the blood of Christ. I will spend eternity with everyone who has ever been born again in Christ. They are all

my brothers and sisters in the family of God. It is unfortunate but true, some of my physical family members will not be in heaven, part of the family of God. The family of God will endure for eternity, never to be separated from one another.

C. Jesus' Clarification (35) – *For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.* Jesus used this uncomfortable moment for many present that day to teach a profound truth. He affirmed those who submitted to the will of God were His family. This great truth remains today and it will never change. Those who submit to the will of God are accepted into the family of God, never to be removed.

- So what exactly is Jesus referring to in this statement; what did He mean by doing the will of God? He is speaking of those who respond to His offer of grace, through the sacrifice of Christ for our sin. Those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation have done the will of God and are placed within the family of God. Those who are born again are placed within His body. This is the will of the Father for all humanity. *2 Pet.3:9 – The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* *Titus 2:11-14 – For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,* ^[12] *Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;* ^[13] *Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;* ^[14] *Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

Conclusion: I hope this has been an enlightening and challenging passage. While some find it difficult to embrace, it reveals eternal truth that requires our response. I must ask today – are you part of the family? Have you responded to the offer of salvation, repenting of sin and believing in Christ alone? If so, is everyone you know part of the family too? No doubt we all have friends and loved ones who are yet unsaved. I pray we will be diligent in our prayers for them and faithful to bear witness of the Gospel before them!