

Jesus' Family
Mark 3:20-21 & 31-35
Halifax: 24 March 2019, 10:30 AM

Introduction

Today in Mark's gospel we will look at another response to Jesus and His response to that response.

- So far we have seen our Lord interacting
 - with *the Pharisees at the synagogue* when He healed a man on the Sabbath,
 - with *His disciples, the multitudes, and the demons* when He withdrew from the city to preach on the shore,
 - with *the twelve* whom He appointed to be His closest disciples and apostles,
 - with *the scribes* who came down from Jerusalem to investigate Him,
- And today we are going to see Him engaging with His family—
 - We are going to see His blood relations who try to control Him, and then we are going to see those whom He calls His true family.
 - Instead of trying to control Him they do the will of God and believe in Him.

It has been two weeks since we looked at Mark, but do you remember how I showed you what is called the sandwich structure of Mark 3:20-35?

- The sandwich structure is a favourite literary device of Mark where you begin a story, then interrupt it to tell a somewhat related story, and then go back to the first story.
 - Last time, we looked at the middle of the sandwich (verses 22-30)...
 - at the story in between where Mark tells us about the scribes who came down from Jerusalem and accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Satan.
 - and of Jesus warning them that they are in danger of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit—a sin for which there is no forgiveness.
 - Today we are going to look at the bread of the sandwich—
 - where you have Jesus' family coming to rescue Him because they think He is deranged in verses 20-21,
 - and then find out what happens with that in verses 31-35.
- But placing these stories together like this, Mark draws out interesting parallels.
 - Both Jesus' family and the scribes have ridiculous explanations of Jesus—
 - His family says that He is deranged.
 - The scribes say that He works by Satan's power.
 - And you have two efforts at binding contrasted...
 - Jesus' family tries to bind Him but cannot.
 - He, the Lord of glory, binds demons.

So having looked at Jesus and the scribes last time,

- we will look at Jesus and His family this time and we will learn how we can be His family today.

Listen as I read the passage to you now. I will read the entire thing from Mark 3:20-35.

- This is the holy Word of God.

Mark 3:20-35: Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. 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.” ²² And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, “He has Beelzebub,” and, “By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons.” ²³ So He called them to *Himself* and said to them in parables: “How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. ²⁶ And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. ²⁷ No one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his

house. ²⁸ Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; ²⁹ but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation” — ³⁰ because they said, “He has an unclean spirit.” ³¹ Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. ³² And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, “Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You.” ³³ But He answered them, saying, “Who is My mother, or My brothers?” ³⁴ And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! ³⁵ For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.”

May the Lord bless the reading of His holy word.

I. Observe here how Jesus’ family tries to control Him.

A. They are convinced that He is deranged.

1. In their minds, He was showing Himself to be a fanatic.
 - a. They had heard of how consumed He was with His ministry as described in verse 20—and they were sure that He had gone out of His mind...
 - Mark 3:20-21 says: **Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.** 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.”**
 - He was so caught up with His ministry that He and His disciples couldn’t even eat regular meals.
 - And the leaders of the Jews were having problems with Him, but He just kept on doing what He had been doing.
 - b. People do not understand zeal for the things of God.
 - If a person is zealous as an athlete or a student or an entrepreneur, or if they have some interest as a collector or an explorer or a sports fan,
 - They are to be admired as hard-working and dedicated...
 - But when they are zealous about God’s kingdom, they are called a fanatic—they are seen to be foolish and thought to be weak in the head.
 - Many who have come to faith in Christ have experienced that.
 - In the minds of the world, religion is fine if it is kept in its place—
 - but if it starts to influence decisions about work, decisions about what you will do on the Lord’s Day, decisions about relationships, decisions about what you will do with your money...
 - if it even affects the way you dress and the things that you do or don’t do... you are a fanatic, you are off your rocker.

- c. That Jesus' family has drawn such a conclusion about Him... that He is out of His mind... only goes to show how mistaken families can be.
 - Imagine it... to think that the Son of God was out of His mind while He is doing His ministry!
 - They were as mistaken, in many ways, as the scribes from Jerusalem who said He was casting out demons by the power of Satan.
- Mistaken though His family was, this is what they concluded.
- 2. As family, Jesus' relations felt responsible for Him.
 - a. And yes, there is a sense in which we are responsible for our family.
 - If they are in trouble, we should be among the first to go to their aid.
 - If they are going astray or being foolish, we should be among the first to reach out to them and to try to help them.
 - The Bible tells us that we are worse than an unbeliever if we do not look after our own.
 - b. Jesus' conduct was an embarrassment to His family.
 - Of course it is true that what a person does can indeed be an embarrassment to their family...
 - Proverbs talks a lot about wayward children bringing shame to their parents—it is true, you represent your family.
 - That is one of the reasons that family relationships can be so strained... what you do does affect their reputation.
 - c. Besides that, they really did care about Jesus, too.
 - He is running Himself into the ground... and not only that... He is irritating some of the leaders and people are talking about it.
 - If they don't restrain Him, will He destroy Himself?
- B. So they set out to take control of Him... to bind the Son of God
 - 1. In verse 21, it says that they went to "lay hold of Him."
 - This a word that is used regularly by Mark of those who are trying seize Jesus, to bind Him so as to deprive Him of His freedom.
 - It is rather ironic that this is the Son of God who binds demons and here is His family trying to bind Him.
 - How mistaken they were to think that they could bind Him—they did not yet grasp that He was truly the Son of God.
 - After stating that they had gone out to bind Him, Mark leaves us hanging...
 - We want to know what will happen—but in verse 22, he tells us of the scribes coming down from Jerusalem.
 - This is the sandwiching I spoke to you about.
 - 2. In verse 31-32, Mark picks up the narrative about Jesus' family again and shows us what they do when they arrive.
 - Mark 3:31-32: **Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You."**

- a. This is very inappropriate behaviour.
 - Here is Jesus, busy about His Father's work, preaching the gospel,
 - and they presume that because they are family, they can interrupt Him.
 - And we know, as perhaps Jesus knew too, that their purpose was not just to speak to Him (that would have been bad enough—to interrupt Him so they could speak to Him),
 - but they wanted to lay hold of Him to take Him away from His ministry and to try to talk sense into Him (what they *thought* was sense).
- b. They felt justified in doing this because they were family and they believed that their cause was a good one. Nobody else cared about Him like they did.
 - But to interfere with the ministry of the Son of God is not a good cause.
 - Besides that, it was highly disrespectful to Him to come after Him as if He was deranged.
 - Did they not know about the signs and wonders that He had performed?
 - Were they not familiar with His godly life of wisdom?
 - Did Mary not remember that He was conceived in her as a virgin by the Holy Spirit and that He was worshipped by angels and said to be Emmanuel?

TRANS> Yet, here are His mother and His brothers, trying to control Him.

II. This improper quest to control is the bane of many families.

A. Any minister will tell you what a huge problem it is.

- I know it both from my family as well as from the ministry I have with your families.
- 1. Where do most of the quarrels come from?
 - Is it not from trying to control each other in inappropriate ways?
 - Fourteen-year-old Betsy is angry with eleven year old Junior because he always leaves his shoes in front of the door—and Junior is irritated with Betsy because she is always getting on his case.
 - Both Betsy and Junior feel that their cause is right and they can spend an hour going on about a shoe incident, getting more and more angry.
- 2. But it is not just with children, is it?
 - Fifty-year-old Ralph is annoyed with Sally because Sally is a big talker—she loves to talk and it wears on him.
 - Why can't they just have a quiet supper without all the chatter?
 - She is irritated with Ralph because he spends too much time with his gardening (partly to get away from Sally's talk, which she senses)—but he is not spending time with the children the way he should.
 - And it interferes with his chores around the house—he just spends too much time and too much money with it... Sally feels like he is married to his garden instead of to her.
 - Both of them want to take control of the other.

- And even when they aren't actually talking about this problem directly, it is still there and it hinders them—it adds fuel to every quarrel that arises.
 - Think about this though...
 - If you could program your spouse to be just what you want, what kind of relationship would that be?
 - One of the reasons for a relationship is that we interact without someone other than ourselves.
 - Instead of appreciating another person—warts and all—we want to control them. We want them be a robot that we can program.
3. Now of course I am talking about inappropriate control here.
- When it comes to children obeying their parents, then yes, parents are supposed to lead their children... to control them as it were.
 - They are supposed to correct them and to rebuke them for their sins and to pray with them and to lead them to repentance.
 - And men are responsible to lead their wives and their children in godly ways.
 - But very often even parental authority is exercised more in a selfish way that doesn't care about other people than in a godly way.
 - A parent is irritated and comes as an angry judge instead of a fellow sinner to correct and discipline an errant child.
 - Or a parent comes as one who is hurt and manipulative—"you don't appreciate me and all I do for you."
 - Or a parent tries to control things that they have no business trying to control.
 - You have an active child and you prefer quietness (or vice versa) —so you are always expressing your displeasure.
 - It is one thing to insist on respect—on being quiet at certain times, but it is wrong to try to force an active child to be quiet all the time.
 - Yours is a quest for control rather than for godly nurture and maturity.
 - When they are little, you should exercise a lot of control, but as they get older, you guide them in making their own decisions.
4. And sometimes, with our spouse, there are real sins.
- You can pray for them, and you can talk to them as they are able to receive it, but let it go!
 - Don't be always trying to force them into what you want them to be.
 - Can't you see that it drives them away?
 - Can't you see that it only increases your own frustration and irritation?
 - Let it go! Drop it!
 - Love them as they are.
 - Try to understand them, and if there is sin that they are not ready to deal with, pray for them.
 - Of course I am not talking about sin that calls for church discipline.
 - I am talking about those sins that are less than that.

- Colossians 3:12-15 give excellent counsel: **Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. ¹⁴ But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. ¹⁵ And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.**
 - When you ignore this counsel, you eventually get to the place where you can't stand each other; where you are always displeased; always wanting what you don't have from them...always wanting them to be what they are not...
 - and always thinking that what you want is only reasonable...always justifying your cause—that you are in the right about it all.
 - No brothers and sisters, let it go, even if you are right.
 - Make it your ambition to love not to control each other.
 - Think of how you can love instead of how you think your spouse needs to change... or your little sister... or your mother... or whoever it is.
 - We are so selfish that we can hardly do this!
 - But you will actually be much happier if you do...
 - Let go, and love!
- B. Need I mention that this same desire to control is also that which divides the church as a family?
1. Whether it is the elders trying to control the congregation beyond their God-given authority...
 - or the congregation complaining and trying to control the elders because they think they don't like what the elders are doing or not doing...
 - God has called us to peace.
 2. It is one thing if there is such sin or heresy as calls for discipline.
 - The loving thing to do in that case is to confront the sin in a biblical gracious way.
 - But for other lesser sins... love covers a multitude of sin...
 - And when it comes to mere preferences of what you want others to be—let it go and love them.

TRANS> But now I want you to consider something else about this quest to control.

- C. Trying to control Jesus was not only the problem of His blood relations; it has also been the bane of the universal church family.
- If you are in Christ, you are part of the family of God...
 - You know that, and often because of your relationship with Jesus, you act like Jesus' blood relations did...like you have a right to control Him!
1. You think you know better than Jesus!
 - a. You think He has called us to do things that are unreasonable.

- Such as to love our enemies—or to bear with our spouse—that might be fine for other people but your situation is different.
 - Or for Him to call for a tithe or to expect us to give one day in seven to His worship when it interferes with basketball.
- b. Or perhaps there are things that we find in the word that we just don't like.
- Maybe, as with Jesus' family, there are things that embarrass you.
 - For example, that the apostle tells slaves to obey their masters; or that God commanded Israel to wipe out the Canaanites.
 - Or that women are not to be pastors or elders—it doesn't make sense to you and it embarrasses you that the Bible says that.
 - Instead of trying to understand these things, you are embarrassed about them and say something like, "Well, it was a different time."
- c. Maybe there are things that seem unfair.
- Things like eternal punishment...
 - and that people go to hell unless they come to Christ—even if they have never heard of Him.
 - Or things like suffering...
 - You know a godly person who has been suffering with and infirmity for years—maybe you have—and you don't understand why God does not heal them.
 - Or you had things happen in your past that you are bitter about and refuse to accept as from the sovereign hand of God—you cannot accept that or that they were just and righteous as far as He is concerned...
 - You can't accept that He has done you no wrong.
2. What do we do to try to control the Lord today when we think He has been unwise or wrong about something?
- a. In a way, it is easier for us to delude ourselves that we are "controlling Him" because He is not here.
- We can simply adjust what we believe!
 - We can ignore what we don't like and we can add what we want.
 - That is how churches have become so diverse in their views—
 - In fact, that is the reason there are so many different religions in the world. It starts with idolatry of adjusting what we believe about God, and before long it is an entirely different religion.
- b. Of course you really can't change Him, just as His family discovered.
- He is the LORD of all, and He does not bend to our wishes.
 - He is altogether perfect and it would defile Him if He were to change for us—as the idolatrous religions of the world show us.
 - Those who try to control Him in by ignoring or adding what they want to Christ and His word are only deceiving themselves.
 - He always remains who He is.

- c. And when it comes to things like suffering in our lives or in the world that we don't like or think isn't fair...
 - We can't take control of Him about that—all we can do is either deny that He is sovereign or become bitter toward Him and reject Him...
 - We become angry and bitter with Him the way families become bitter and angry with each other when they cannot take control of each other.
- 3. The wise path is to recognise who He is!
 - that He is the LORD of glory and that there is no flaw in Him at all!
 - All His ways are holy and just.
 - We need to bow to Him instead of trying to control Him.

TRANS> These who are trying to control Jesus, though they are blood relations, are showing that they are not His true family.

III. Jesus reveals to us who His true family is!

A. He Himself asks the question (v. 33): “Who is my mother, or My brothers?”

- And then He answers His own question.
 1. First, that they are those who are seated around Him to hear His word.
 - **v. 34: And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers!”**
 - What a contrast.
 - His blood relations are standing outside, calling Him to come and do what they think He should do... but He claims as family those who are sitting at His feet to learn of Him.
 - That is where His people will be found... sitting at His feet...
 - They are hungry for His word.
 - They do not try to instruct Him, but they sit at His feet to be instructed by Him.
 2. Second, He tells that they are the ones who do the will of God.
 - In verse 35, He says: “**For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.**”
 - He has been making known the will of His Father in all His preaching.
 - Do you remember what we have seen in Mark?
 - He goes everywhere preaching the gospel.
 - It was summarised for us in Mark 1:14-15: **Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”**
 - God's will is for all to repent and believe the gospel—the gospel is the good news that with Jesus Christ the kingdom of God is at hand.
 - The King is here.
 - Believe in Him.
 - He is the Son of God, He is the LORD of all, He is the only Saviour.
 - *If He is the Son of God, it is not for you to direct Him.*

- *If He is the LORD of all*, it is not for you to control Him but Him to control you... you cannot bind Him, you serve.
- *If He is the Saviour*, it is not you who delivers Him, but He who delivers you. You can't rescue Him from anything, but you can't be rescued without Him.
 - The good news is that He has come from heaven to save us from our sins and that in Him is everlasting life.

TRANS> If you believe in Him as Lord and Saviour, He calls you His family.

B. What a consolation this is!

1. He loves us as His own family... if we only believe. He is our brother.
 - And what a brother He is!
 - a. As our brother, He redeems us—
 - 1) redeems us in the sense of setting us free from the clutches of Satan... crushing Satan to set us free...
 - No brother who was worth anything and was able to do so would leave his brother in the grip of a cruel enemy without doing all he could to redeem him—and when Jesus does all that He can, He rescues us.
 - 2) And as our brother, He also redeems us in the sense of paying for our sins on the cross... bearing our punishment so that we can be spared.
 - This you would not expect of any brother... no matter how faithful... that when we have sought to overthrow our father that he would take our place in bearing the punishment...
 - And all the more could this not be expected when our Father is the holy God who made heaven and earth in whom there is perfect love and kindness and purity.
 - But as our brother, He redeems us by bearing the curse of God for us.
 - b. How He loves us... He who has redeemed us will do all things for us...
 - He protects us, He provides for us, He guides us, He instructs us, He delivers us, He sticks with us, He crushes our enemies...
2. What a consolation this is to know that you belong to His family...
 - a. If you don't have a family in this world that loves you...
 - You have this spiritual family that Jesus calls His family.
 - He is not like us in our fallen estate—with broken families that reject us... He knows how to love and He does love.
 - We are His, we belong to Him, and He is ours, He belongs to us.
 - b. And if you do have a family in this world that loves you...
 - Know that here, in Christ, is a family that loves you even more.
 - If they are in His family too, you have a double bond with them.
 - What a marvellous thing it is to know that in Him, we will never be severed from those we love—we will only grow up to perfection with them, learning with them to love as He loves.

C. Let us take delight in learning to live as His family!

1. Let us learn to do the will of the Father—that is what His family does.

- It begins with believing on Him whom the Father has sent.
 - It begins with receiving Him as Lord and Saviour.
 - It begins with recognising that it is not for you to rule Him, but Him to rule you.
2. So learn to sit at His feet, to learn of Him, to worship Him.
- That is what His family does.
 - We simply give up ourselves to Him as our Lord and Saviour.
 - He is not ashamed to call us His brothers because He has cleansed us from our sin by His own blood.