

## Choosing God over Family

*The Gospel of Luke*

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**Bible Text:** Luke 12:49-53; Luke 14:26

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Alright, good morning, everyone. If you'd like to open your Bibles and stand for the reading of God's word to Luke 12. Sunday mornings we've been working our way through Luke's gospel verse by verse. We find ourselves at Luke 12:49. Let's read through 12:49 to 53. Jesus said,

49 "I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! 50 I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished! 51 Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. 52 For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. 53 They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

You can be seated.

*Father, we thank you for your word and the wonderful work it does in our lives, sanctifying us and cleansing us, revealing your Son to us, bringing to salvation those who are unsaved. We would pray that for anyone who sits here today still in their sin that you would do that work in their hearts, that you'd grant them repentance and faith in Christ. For those who are saved, continue to grow us into the image and likeness of Christ. Thank you for these verses this morning. I think there are some hard truths in them, but some very encouraging ones for people who have had to choose you over family members. Help us to be encouraged by what we read and to take these lessons with us for the times that we might have to choose, choose you over family members, experience some of the division that's discussed here. Use me as your vessel, Lord. Help us to be focused on you and attentive to what you would say to us in the scriptures. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Excuse me one more second.

So the title of this morning's sermon is "Choosing God over Family." Choosing God over family, and there aren't many situations that would be more difficult in the Christian life

than having to choose God over family members. Consider the following examples. Let's say there's a relative who perhaps is wanting to be married for some period of time, and then they come to you, a relative who claims to be a believer and is very excited that they believe God has finally brought someone into their lives, and maybe they even ask you to be part of the wedding, which is something that occurred with us one time where I was asked to be the best man in a wedding, but we didn't feel we could support. And then you have to tell that person, perhaps because they're marrying an unbeliever or they're marrying someone that you are convinced that biblically they shouldn't marry and then you have to tell them. You have to choose God over this, over them, and tell them that you can't support this wedding. Or an individual claims to be a believer, and you're close to this person, you're noticing a pattern of habitual sin. Yeah, you're seeing decisions that this person makes. You're becoming increasingly convinced that the person should be approached, rebuked for their behavior. You obviously don't want to do this. You love this person. You want to maintain a good relationship with them but you believe that God is calling you to choose him over this person, and so you're forced to go to this person or rebuke them for their sin. We have people that we know and when they have had to choose God over family, what that has meant is they have had to support church discipline against family members. Imagine how difficult or even excruciating that would be. We've had known people who had asked family members to leave the house. They've asked children to leave the house when those children have been rebellious perhaps because that the children would just not respect their parents' authority or they were becoming a terrible influence on the other children in the home. And so in those instances, to choose God over family involved doing those sorts of excruciating things.

As you can imagine, even though the people did make the right decision, it was very painful. There are examples in the Old Testament of people who had to choose God over family. Here are just a couple of them. After the Israelites had constructed the golden calf, do you remember what God called the Israelites to do to those who had taken part in the construction? In Exodus 32:27, Moses said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'Put your sword on your side each of you, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor.'" This gives us an idea of just how wicked idolatry was viewed in the Old Testament that the Israelites were called to execute those people who had taken part in the building of the golden calf, even if that meant executing people that were family members.

Another example also involving idolatry. King Asa is one of the best kings in the Old Testament, one of the great reformers, probably only second to Hezekiah and Josiah, and when he was performing this purging of idolatry from the land, does anyone remember which family member of his had an idol? His own grandmother did, and then he had to banish her. 1 Kings 15:13, Asa "removed Maacah his mother from being queen mother because she had made an abominable image for Asherah. And Asa cut down her image and burned it at the brook Kidron." And so the scripture doesn't tell us this, but I tend to wonder, did he receive some amount of criticism from people for banishing his own mother like that? You know, were there people that pitied her and thought that what he was doing was so harsh and terrible?

You could listen to this and you could say, "Well, this is Old Testament, so you're bringing up these examples and we live under the New Testament, the Old Testament, so harsh and severe, you know, the New Testament, love and grace and mercy." Well, we've reached some verses in the New Testament that reveal that even though we're not called to execute our family members, the Lord still chooses or commands us to choose him over family members. There's still the same expectation today that Christ would occupy that position of supremacy and superiority in our lives where there would never be any question in our minds regarding choosing him over anyone else, including our own family members.

Look at verse 49. Well, actually, one second. He's first, just so you understand the momentum into the verses, Christ is first going to talk about the divisiveness of the gospel itself before moving into the need to choose him over family members. So kind of keep that in mind and look with me at the verse 49. Jesus says, "I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled!" Fire represents judgment, not really any disagreement about that with commentators. And so Jesus is talking about how he is coming to bring judgment on the earth.

Now, this isn't normally how we think about Christ's first coming, is it? We typically think of Christ coming and bringing judgment in his or fire to the earth in his second coming, but in his first coming this is when he came to save instead. For example, in John 12:47, he said, "I did not come to judge the world but to save the world," regarding his first coming. Yes, Jesus did come to save the world in his first coming but let me ask you this: what happens to those people who reject him in his first coming? They get judged. They get judged, and so in the very... so you could say that Jesus came to save the world in his first coming but those who reject that salvation have chosen judgment by default in the very next verse. So let me read it so you hear the momentum, John, 12:47, "I did not come to judge the world but to save the world." Verse 48, "The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day." And so Christ is very clear that even though he came to save, for those that forfeit that salvation experience that fire; they are going to experience that fire that he brought in his first coming.

Now look at the next verse for those who don't reject Christ but receive him, verse 50 he says, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!" What's the baptism he's talking about here? Yeah, his crucifixion, his death on a cross. And so right after talking about the judgment that unbelievers will receive, Jesus talks about the judgment that he received on behalf of believers. So he talks about the judgment unbelievers receive, and then after that he talks about the judgment he receives for believers. This baptism is the crucifixion. The word "baptize" means "immersed," and typically we hear the word "baptism" and think almost exclusively of water, but considering it means immersed that's why we can talk about someone being baptized or immersed in their thoughts, or when someone is suffering very badly we'll say that they're experiencing, you know, a baptism with fire. And this is

what Jesus was talking about with himself here, this baptism or immersion and suffering that he's going to experience on the cross.

And just the thought of it cost him, what? Look at the verse, just the thought of it. Now I mean, we're talking months. I mean, I suspect throughout his life, just the thought of it. There had to have been an awareness much earlier than before his earthly ministry began that he was heading to the cross and just the thought of the cross caused him, what? What does it say? Yeah, distress. Just immense, unimaginable agony, not from the cross itself but just the thought of the cross and he says it's going to be terrible distress until it is accomplished, or basically until it's behind me, until I've been able to do what I've come to do.

And so, because Jesus was God in the flesh, sometimes we lose sight of his humanity. We probably think of Jesus more as the Son of God than we think of him as the Son of man. Well, this is one of those instances when we get a real window into Christ's humanity. He had the same aversion to suffering that we do. He was not immune to it. He experienced fatigue like we do. He experienced rejection like we do. He experienced betrayal like we do. He experienced all of the pains and sufferings of life on this side of heaven as we do as a human. He felt them the same way that we do. He felt perhaps even some of the sin or betrayal he experienced in an even greater way than we do.

The distress for Christ not from the cross but from the thought of the cross, became so great that there was a moment when he had, you know, approached the cross and was only hours from it that as he labored in prayer it seems, this is my best understanding of what occurred, that the blood vessels, the intense agony as he's in the garden, you know, considering what's approaching became so intense that the blood vessels are breaking and that blood on his forehead mingling with the sweat, it just drops this sweat of blood on the ground. Luke 22:44 it says, "being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground." But despite the terrible agony, distress associated just with the thought of going to the cross, he was still willing to go, determined to do what he knew was the main reason he was to come.

And notice how Jesus ties these two great events together. I want you to notice this association. This will be important. He ties together the judgment of unbelievers and he ties together with the judgment he receives for believers. So he ties together the judgment of unbelievers with the judge, excuse me, he ties together the judgment of unbelievers with the judgment that he receives for believers, and he ties them together because his suffering on the cross is the only way that we can escape the fire to come upon the earth, and so there is a very clear association between the two of them. The only way to escape the fire that he would bring, that he discusses in verse 49, is for us, is for him to receive that fire himself or consume that cup of God's wrath on the cross in our place.

Now at this moment after hearing about even just the thought that Christ was willing to drink all the dregs of God's wrath that's against us, you know, there's this looming, you know, hatred that God has in his heart towards sin, and because of the sin that we've experienced all of this wrath of his that would be bound up in him toward us, just

awaiting the day that it would be poured out on us, and Christ is willing to step into our place and he is willing to drink and willing to consume all the wrath that's against us, and you just think that there's nothing that could sound better than that. I mean, who would reject, who would reject that? Who wouldn't want that?

Well, right after following Christ for that sounds wonderful. Christ wants us to know that following him also comes with a cost, that there is also going to be some suffering that we're going to experience as his disciples. And there are different places, you know, in the epistles where Paul talks about suffering for Christ, what that could look like, where Jesus talks about picking up your cross, but in these verses Jesus zooms in on one particular cost that you might have to pay in following him and that is division from family members. Look with me at verse 51. He says, "Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division." And this is another interesting verses and so it's almost like these few verses are pregnant with contradicting views of Christ than we're used to. So first with God, Jesus is talking about bringing judgment in his first coming, pretty much the opposite of what we typically think, and now we've got Jesus talking about bringing division in his first coming when we normally think about him bringing peace in his first coming.

This contradicts not only what the world believes, but even what many in the church believe and here's what I mean. There are unbelievers who have never wanted to spend one day of their lives living for Christ. If they hear you condemn sin, if they hear you preach repentance, if they hear you discuss God's wrath or talk about hell or judgment or God's anger toward people, they are going to immediately pipe up. They're going to tell you all about Jesus, this Jesus that they've never served and that they know almost nothing about and tell you how he was a man of peace and you shouldn't be talking about these things. This is antithetical to the way that he lived and you're saying these things that Jesus never would have said in his life. He's all about love. He's all about mercy. So they never wanted anything to do with Jesus earlier, but the moment that they can use him, you know, to argue their agenda or their points, then they're going to do that. But here's what's interesting: when these people are talking about Jesus being a man of peace and love and mercy, we do know, what? That's true. There's truth in what these unbelievers would say when they argue with us. The announcement in Luke 2:14 when Jesus came was, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace." Ephesians 2:17 says Jesus came and preached peace. He regularly told people, "Go in peace." He told his disciples, "My peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you." And he taught, "These things I have spoken to you that in me you might have peace."

And so we've reached what seems to be a pretty clear contradiction here, which I could emphasize by just asking you this simple question: was Jesus a man who brought peace, or was Jesus a man who brought division?

[unintelligible]

Yes, that's correct. And this brings us to lesson 1. The gospel creates, part 1, peace between God and man. The gospel creates, part 1, peace between God and man. Listen to

this verse, Romans 5:10, "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." So prior to our salvation, prior to being born again, what describes our relationship with God? We were, what? His enemies it says. We were not born children of God. We were born his enemies. Our sin made us as enemies, but after we repent and put our faith in Christ we're reconciled to him. Romans 5:1 says, "since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Colossians 1:20, "through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." And so the gospel brings peace between God and man. The gospel does something that nothing else in all of human history, no amount of human effort could ever accomplish, and that is creating peace or reconciling sinful, wretched, wicked people like me and like you, with a completely perfect and holy and righteous and just God. That's what the gospel can do, and there's nothing in all of our human effort that could ever do that.

So it creates peace in a way that nothing could ever create peace but here's the thing: to be reconciled to God means experiencing division from unbelievers. Let me say that one more time: to be reconciled to God means experiencing division from unbelievers. And think of it this way, these two kingdoms and everyone is part of them or part of one of them, we're all born into the kingdom of darkness, and when Christ ransoms us from it, delivers us from that kingdom, we find ourselves in the kingdom of light, or the kingdom of God, or in Matthew's gospel, the kingdom of heaven. But everyone is in one of these two kingdoms, there's no middle ground, there's no neutrality in this battle, there's no neutrality in this spiritual war that is taking place, and to be delivered from the kingdom of darkness and brought into the kingdom of light means to experience division. We cannot maintain a peace or harmony with those who are part of the kingdom of darkness. We can't remain part of that kingdom, the gospel creates, part 2, division between man and man. The gospel creates, part 2, division between man and man.

I'm going to share a few verses from Jesus' earthly ministry that allow you to appreciate the division that was taking place with people over Christ even before he went to the cross. John 7:12, "there was much muttering about [Jesus] among the people. While some said, 'He is a good man,' others said, 'No, he is leading the people astray.'" Do you catch the division there? You've got some people that are saying he's good and then you've got other people that are saying he's bad, which is why a few verses later, John 7:43, "So there was division among the people over him." Another example, John 9:16, "Some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.' But others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner,' how could a man who is not from God, 'do such signs?' And there was a division among [the people]." Another example, John 10:19, "There was again a division among the Jews because of [Christ's] words."

So even before Jesus went to the cross, who is living this very divisive life, people are finding themselves in one of two camps, those who reject him and those who received him, and this division plays out past Christ's earthly life; it's going to continue through all of human history where everyone finds themselves in one of these two groups. Listen to what happened when Jesus sent out the 12 apostles and how it created division. Matthew

10:12, "As you enter the house," he tells the apostles sent out in pairs, "As you enter the house, greet it." Well, it was probably the greeting that these Jews used when they entered a house. What did they probably say?

[unintelligible]

Yeah, they probably said, "Shalom." They probably said, "Peace or peace be with you." That was the common greeting of the day. So you have these disciples that come into the house, things were looking pretty good at first, right, or they were the apostles at this point, apostles, disciple means student or learner, apostle means sent out one with a message. And so at what point did the 12 disciples become the 12 apostles? At the moment that they were sent out. So right now we're looking at the apostles that are sent out. They're going to people's homes and they greet the home and they say, "Peace."

Matthew 10:13, "if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it." So again it sounds good. Everyone getting along well. Then the verse goes on and says, "but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you." So they're not even supposed to let the peace remain there. They can't even leave their peace. And it gets worse, "if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town." And I thought, that's pretty severe division, isn't it? The division is so strong that when you leave that unbelieving house, you can't even take any of the dirt with you. You can't take anything from them, there has to be such a clear division here.

Listen to how Peter describes unbelievers and we get an insight into why there is this division. 1 Peter 4:3 he says unbelievers live in "sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you." So when these unbelievers do these things and you don't join them in their sinfulness then they're going to malign you. Well, what does malign mean? The New King James says "speak evil of you." The NASB says "slander you." The NIV says "abuse you." And the Amplified, it covers all the bases and it says "they criticize and abuse and ridicule and to make fun of your values." So basically, because you're not doing, when you don't do the things that they do, what does that communicate to them? That you disapprove of their behavior or their actions. You're not necessarily communicating that you think you're better than them, but that's very much what they're going to hear. When you say that, "I'm not going to go to that wedding, or I cannot support this behavior, or I won't go with you to watch that movie, or I do not think that I should go into that location," you don't necessarily think you're better and most believers recognize that the difference between believers and unbelievers isn't that believers are better but the believers are forgiven, or that believers have been imputed with the righteousness of Christ because we lack the righteousness needed to go to heaven. So most believers would never tell you that they think that they are any better than unbelievers but that's when unbelievers receive from those sorts of actions when we're not going to, align with them, then they're going to malign us.

And notice how the gospel contains this tremendous irony. It creates peace, the gospel creates peace like nothing in all of human history has ever or could ever create peace. It

creates that peace between a perfectly holy and just God and sinful, wretched, wicked people like us. But the gospel also creates division like nothing in all of human history has ever created division. It divides. The division is so strong it divides every single person who has ever lived and who will ever live into one of these two groups and there is no middle ground between them. Believers/unbelievers. Saints, born again, you know, not born again. And going to heaven, going to hell.

And the division between the groups is so strong that it can even divide, what?

[unintelligible]

Families, which Jesus tells us to expect in the following verses. And for many throughout human history, embracing Christ has meant ruined relationships with family members. For some it has meant being martyred. I'd say that's a smaller number. For the larger number of people it has meant division from family members. Look with me at verse 52. Jesus says, "from now on," notice this, "in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three." Now, the part that stuck out to me, which is why I have chosen the title I have for this sermon, is the phrase "in one house," because you might expect Jesus to say there will be three against two and two against three in one, what? Workplace? Or in one school? Or in one business? Or in one organization? But he says "in one house" because he is specifically talking about division among family members.

Look at verse 53. He says, "They will be divided," you're going to have, "father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law." Again, we might expect him to say there's going to be division but division, what? Master against servant. Student against teacher. On a team, player against player, or coworker against coworker. Even perhaps a neighbor against neighbor. But he just jumps past all of that and he goes to the closest, most intimate relationships we have which are those with our family members.

And why does he do this? Did Jesus not mention students/teachers, masters/servants, boss and employee, coworker and coworker because we should not expect division in those relationships? Is that why he made no mention of division in those areas? No, not at all. We can definitely expect division in those relationships. The reason that we can expect division in every area of life is because of our commitment to Christ, but Jesus' worded it this way because if Jesus expects us to choose him over, who? Father, son, mother, daughter, brother, sister, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law, father in law's, son-in-law, then law he expects us to choose him over, what? Anything. Everyone. He argues the greater to imply the lesser, and the idea is that Jesus doesn't need to mention every imaginable relationship and say, "Well, you need to choose me over this and this and this," you know, 40 verses just discussing every single person you could possibly know in your life. He just, you know, jumps to the front of the line and says that if you know, you need to choose me over these people, the greater people in your life, the closest and most intimate relationships which easily teaches that if we are to choose him over father,



mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, then there's nothing, there's nobody, there's no other relationship that would ever threaten our relationship with Christ, that we would not choose him over that relationship. "If you want to follow me, you must choose me even over those people," which implies choosing him over any of the lesser people in our lives.

Few things are as difficult as choosing God over family and so I want to give you four encouragements if you find yourself having to do so. I want to give you four encouragements if you ever find yourself in that very difficult, excruciating situation where you are forced to choose the Lord over a family member. And this is the first encouragement, lesson 2, choosing God over family allows us to, part 1, be like Christ. Allows us to be like Christ. Let me say it like this: in Jesus earthly life were his closest relationships with his immediate or biological family? No, he demoted them at times.

Turn to Luke 8. Turn to Luke 8. Jesus is a great example of what he preached, and he demonstrated choosing God over family by teaching that the closest relationships in his own life were not with his physical family members, but with his spiritual family. Luke 8, look at verse 19, "his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd." Now go ahead and pause, I don't want to have you flipping around a lot of places, but I believe based on some complementary verses in Mark that his family visited him because they were concerned about him. They had heard the rumors about how busy he was. Did you know that there was even discussion of Jesus being crazy? Not because he was acting in any sort of way that we typically think of as crazy, but crazy because he wasn't eating or sleeping. He was so busy, he was so consumed helping people that they thought he was out of his mind and so I believe that his family came to him at this time because they were so concerned about the way that he was acting.

And so these brothers, it would be his half-brothers in that they have the same mother in Mary but they have a different father, God the Father is God the Son's Father, but these brothers had Joseph, Jesus' earthly father as their father. So these are his stepbrothers, his half-brothers and Mary is with them, probably Jesus' earthly father, Joseph, has died at this point. There's not much record of him following Jesus' earthly life, but the family he had alive have come to see him and I believe warn him about the way or maybe not warn him, but at least share, express their concern about the way that he's living and acting and they reach this house and, of course, they can't even reach him because he's doing the exact thing that they've heard about him doing, which is being too busy with everyone all the time.

And so verse 20 Jesus is told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, and they desire to see you." Now go ahead and picture what this looks like. Really picture what this is looking like. Jesus is in Capernaum. Now his family traveled 30 miles from Nazareth, his hometown, to reach him, which would be no small thing in the ancient world. I don't know the last time I can find anything revealing the last time Jesus has seen his mother and his siblings, but I'm guessing it very well could have been quite a length of time based on the lengths that they went to to reach him to travel in the ancient world, for all of them to come together like this. It was not an easy thing to do. It would have

taken an amount of communication and coordination. They couldn't text each other or e-mail each other and say, "Let's meet at this point and let's go at this time." It would have been a difficult thing for them to make this trip but because of their concern for Christ, they have decided to do it anyway. It would have been much sacrifice involved, and they reach the house. They can't get in, but fortunately for them, they believe someone is sent as a messenger to tell Jesus said his family is outside and he gets this message and they're waiting outside. We're not told how long they waited, but it would have been some amount of time, and what would you expect Jesus to say at this moment? "Well, bring them in. You know, this is my mother and these are my brothers. Don't make them wait out there." Or, "Oh, wow, they're here. My family's here. You know, I'd better go see them. I'm really excited." Or, "Excuse me, you know for a moment, you're not going to believe this, I know I'm right in the middle of teaching, but my mother and my family has shown up here to see me and so can you excuse me just for this moment so I can go greet them and then I'll be back?" He didn't say anything like that.

Listen to what he said instead in verse 21. He answered, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it." In the parallel account in Matthew's gospel, 12:48, he said, "Who is my mother and who are my brothers?" That would be pretty hurtful, wouldn't it? I mean, if you imagine that you've made this trip and then it's like, what did the messenger come back out and relay this message to them? Was Mary and her other children told, "No, we're sorry. Jesus isn't going to come out and see you." And they say, "Well, what did he say?" "Well, he actually said, who is my mother and who are my brothers, like he doesn't know who you are." I mean, that would have been a very painful thing to be relayed to them.

Now, before I tell you what Jesus was doing, I want to tell you what he wasn't doing. He wasn't rejecting or abandoning his earthly family, and again, he wasn't minimizing the importance of earthly family members. Instead, what he was doing was emphasizing the importance of spiritual relationships with those people who obey. And I mention this because it's a good example for us in this discussion. When we choose God over family members, what are we not doing? We're not rejecting those people. We're not abandoning them. We're not minimizing their importance or saying that they're insignificant to us. Instead, we are emphasizing the importance of Christ. We are communicating the value we place on our relationship with the Lord and how regardless of how important our earthly family members are, the Lord is that much more important to us. You know, I believe that God's repetitive when he wants to make sure we don't miss something and this is one of the unique accounts that's in all of the synoptic gospels, which tells me we're not supposed to miss this.

Similarly, when Jesus spoke to Mary, what do we have no record of him ever calling her? We have no record of Jesus calling Mary, mother. He always called her woman. John 2:4, Jesus said to Mary, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." John 19:26, "When Jesus saw his mother he said, 'Woman, behold, your son!'" So there were two relationships that Jesus and Mary had, one earthly/physical, and one heavenly/spiritual. There is the earthly/physical relationship of mother and son, but then there's also the heavenly/spiritual relationship of Savior/sinner, right? And which of

these did Jesus always emphasize? Jesus always communicated that, "I am your Savior, you are a sinner and I am your Savior." Jesus never did what the Catholic Church has done. There is no support for that sin that Catholics engage in, elevating Mary to some position of prominence that she never coveted and never wanted, and I say that as a credit to her. As a great, wonderful, godly woman, she allowed the relationship of Christ being her Savior even more importantly than him being her son. So it's just clear which relationship Jesus emphasized, and we must do the same with our family members.

The next part of lesson 2, choosing God over family allows us to, part 2, teach our children. Choosing God over family allows us to, part 2, teach our children. I just want you to picture a situation, maybe one that's happened with you. This is a situation that has happened with us, so I share this from our experience and some of the conversations we've been able to have as a family when it has occurred. You imagine unbelieving family members who probably think that they're good, or probably they might even be religious, they might go to church, but they don't share your values. You're convinced they're not believers despite what they say. They believe they're going to heaven. It's evident to you they have not surrendered their lives to Christ and they're not going to heaven. And so they invite your children to watch a movie, and it's just not a movie that you want your children to watch, or they invite your children to do something and you're just not comfortable with it, or maybe they just want to invite your children over and you don't know what they have planned and so that's why you're not comfortable with it. Or maybe they invite your children over and you do know what they have planned, but you're just not comfortable with your children being with them without you being there because that was one situation for us when we had when Ray was invited with some family members and we just thought, you know, we don't really want Ray with these family members without us being there, even though we were not convinced they're going to do anything that we watch a movie or listen to music we wouldn't like, but we're just not sure what these people might talk to Ray about. And so we weren't comfortable with it. Well, sometimes then your children get upset with you about that. Your children might say, and I would just say this if the children would tune in for a moment, your temptation is to think that your parents don't trust you. You're going to say something to your parents, "Well, you know, why won't you let me go? Don't you trust me?" Well, it's not an issue of, it might not be an issue of trust, maybe it is an issue of trust and then hopefully your parents have the integrity to say, "You're right. We don't trust you, actually. Maybe we would let one of your siblings, but you have shown us you can't be trusted and so we can't let you do this." Maybe that is the case, but if that's not the case and it doesn't have anything to do with trusting the child, then you can tell the child, "Well, no, we do trust you but we have a responsibility to protect you. We are responsible with what influences you and what is brought into your life as long as," and this is the conversation I have with my children, "as long as you're in this home and you're welcome to stay here," at least I've told my daughters I hope they'd stay in our home until they're married, until I can walk them down the aisle and pass them along to a husband that hopefully I can view as like I would view one of my sons, and my sons, they're welcome to stay with me. I hope they do as long as the Lord allows. If they have to leave, perhaps for a job or something else, then that would be fine, at least when they get married I expect that. But I tell them, "As long as you're here, then I'm responsible and I need to do

my very best, and you might not like this at this moment but your mother and I are convinced that this is what's best for you, and I hope later you can appreciate that. I know you're upset with me right at this moment. I'm not trying to upset you. I am genuinely sorry that you feel this way, but it is actually, it's not my frustration toward you, it is my love for you that has led me to make this decision. It is because I care about you and I want what's best for you that we have made this decision. I am sorry that it bothers you so much." You can say things like, "Do you think this is what Christ would want for you? You know, you want to go there but is that what the Lord wants? Is that what's best for you? As your parents, this is my most important stewardship." Second to Katie, second to my marriage, my most important stewardship, the church's this is my stewardship of my children. And so to tell them, "I need to be wise. I need to do what I think is best for you. You have the choice to submit or not." You know, children, you guys should, no parents are under any illusion about the authority they have and it's really only an authority that God gives them but that you recognize because any child can get up in the middle of the night and just run out of the house and take off and cast off their parents authority. But I've told my children, "As long as you'll remain at home under my authority, then I want to do the best I can to honor that and care for you and love you and protect you. Our greatest love and loyalty has to be reserved for the Lord, and that's why we made this decision, because this is what we think blesses him that he would want in your life as your parents," and it allows our children to hopefully see our faithfulness to Christ, hopefully something they might remember even if they're not appreciating it right at that moment, they might appreciate it later and then hopefully apply that same parenting to their own children in the future, maybe even if you're really fortunate as a parent, maybe your children call you back 10-15 years later and say, "Hey, do you remember when you had that conversation? You wouldn't let me do that? Now I'm not letting my kid do that just like it had happened and thanks for your example." I'm really waiting for those phone calls.

Next part of lesson 2: choosing God over family allows us to, part 3, discuss our faith. Choosing God over family also has the blessing of allowing us to discuss our faith. So let's back up to that previous example I used and say that we didn't just upset our children, we also upset, who? We upset those family members when they found out that we were not going to let our children go with them, right? How well is it going to go with those family members when they learn that we would not allow our children to go with them? Those family members are going to think, what? "What? What, you don't trust us? You think we're bad people? You think we're so evil we're going to do these horrible things with your children? Is that it? You think we're some kind of, you know, horrible sinners and, I mean, is that what you're telling me, you can't even trust your children with me?" Well, that's going to provide another wonderful opportunity for discussion, to talk with those family members and say, "I am sorry that this has upset you and I do understand why it did, and I do see why you feel this way." There's nothing wrong with empathizing with them and saying, "If I was in your situation, I would probably feel the same way. I do understand why this has offended you, and we did consider that. I am sorry that's the case, but as Christians we believe this. As Christians, we believe this is what Christ has called us to, and so because of that, this is the decision that we have made. It feels personal to you. It's not intended to be personal, but as Christians this is

what the Bible says. You know, listen to these verses. This is how we apply it in our lives. And so we feel that we had to say no to this. You are welcome to do this. Or you are welcome to come over and be with our children. Or there is this sphere of relationship that is acceptable to us, but in this situation we feel like we had to say no, no."

After you explain the motivation behind the decision, at best, hopefully they'll see where you're coming from and they might even have a change of heart. At worst, they're going to be angry but I would say this: even if they're angry, they're still going to respect you. They're still going to respect your conviction and that you had the courage to do what you thought God wanted you to do even if they didn't like it. At least they won't think you're hypocrites, which is a nice thing. You want to have family members who might disagree with you but at least don't think you're hypocrites, right? At least they say this, they say, "D you know what? I am not going to be a Christian, and I disagree with a whole bunch of stuff about Christianity, but at least I can look at my, you know, brother, cousin, uncle, aunt, whoever that is a Christian and if I was going to be a Christian, I would want to be one like him or I would want to be one like her." And so at least they won't think we're hypocrites, even if they disagree with us.

And the next part of lesson 2: choosing God over family allows us to, part 4, show God we love him. Show God that we love him. When situations arise and we have to choose God between our family members, there shouldn't be a choice. There really should be no choice. Our greatest love and our commitment has to be to Christ. It is easy to say that we love Christ, or it is easy to say that we love God, but there are some times that it's a lot harder to show it and one of the times that it's very difficult to show that we love the Lord is when we have to demonstrate it by choosing him over a family member. Now because of that and just think about this for a moment and hear me when I ask this because I think it's a very important part of this sermon: when we choose the Lord over family members, it is painful but it is also, what? It is a privilege. It is a privilege. It is a privilege to be able to communicate to Christ that he means more to you than that family member does. It is a pretty it is a blessing to be able, especially in our American society, where, at least at this point, there is not a whole lot that we have had to suffer for Christ or sacrifice for him. Again, I think we're going to practically, we're going to owe an apology to our persecuted brothers and sisters in parts of the world if we keep up this nonsense about us being persecuted. Now, the persecution could come and at that point we can talk about it, but right now I don't think that we're being persecuted for our faith. There's not a whole lot of cost associated with following Christ right now for us. The one time when we can pay something and communicate to Christ our commitment to him is when we choose him over a family member. Maybe the time of persecution will come, and then it'll be very easy, division will be totally obvious and we'll be able to sacrifice so much for the Lord and we'll be able to claim that we're as persecuted as people in other parts of the world, but we're not there yet. But when we get to choose Christ over a family member, it is a privilege because of what it communicates. It communicates our love for him. It communicates our loyalty to him. And it communicates that we value our relationship with him more than we value any other relationship in our lives, even those relationships that are closest to us, second to Christ.

Turn to Luke 14:26. Luke 14:26. Jesus says, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." Now, here's the simplest way I can say this: in scripture the word "hate" doesn't always mean hate like we think of it. It isn't as literal. This is one of those times where there's hyperbole or figurative language used. Often the word "hate" is used to create a contrast or to elevate or differentiate or distinguish one thing from another. It's not even necessarily that one of the things is devalued or demoted. Instead, it's that one thing is given greater value or promoted.

For example, Romans 9:13, 'As it is written, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.'" That's a quote of Malachi 1:2 and 3 and it sounds pretty bad, doesn't it? Esau wasn't the godliest guy, so you could understand why God would have some hostility toward him, but it's not referring to an actual emotional hatred toward Esau. In fact, Esau seemed to have been a very blessed man. Nations, multiple nations came from him. He was greatly blessed. But it's figurative language to describe God choosing Jacob over Esau, and then the spiritual blessings that came to Jacob as a result of that choice. And so in contrast it could look like God loved one and hated the other, but that's not the case. And it's the same with Luke 14:26. Jesus clearly didn't mean that we should hate our parents, our spouse, and our children. We should not literally hate our own lives. We shouldn't go out and commit suicide to get over these lies that we despise so much. And this is obvious because of the other places in scripture which gives such weight to the way that we treat, value, love, respect, obey, care for our family members. The person who doesn't care for their family members, scripturally speaking, is worse than, what? An unbeliever. I mean, I don't even know what's worse than an unbeliever. And it's like, how could you be worse than an unbeliever? Well, apparently if you don't treat your family, well, you're even worse than an unbeliever. I mean, I didn't even know there was a category worse than that but for people to mistreat their family members, they get to be in that category. And so Jesus clearly doesn't mean this as literally as it sounds, but instead the idea is when contrasting our love for the Lord with the love that we have for others, our love for the Lord would be so much greater than in contrast it would almost seem as though we hate our family members because we have such love and affection for Christ. One of the things about this was particularly encouraging to me almost 20 years ago when I became a Christian, is my family actually did feel like I hated them. I had family members who did feel like I despised them. I didn't, but they did. Your family might feel like you hate them when you choose Christ over them when that's not the case at all, and so that was a part that really ministered to me.

Now I want to conclude with this: not only does the gospel create peace between God and man, it also creates peace for man. Let me say that one more time: not only does the gospel create peace between God and man, it also creates peace for man. Philippians 4:6, "do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." So for those of us in Christ, we can have a peace that surpasses our own understanding. Well, what does that mean exactly? It means you have peace when you don't understand it. It means you have peace when you expect that you wouldn't, or when everything says

that you shouldn't. You have peace, no matter how difficult your circumstances are, no matter what you're going through, no matter how painful it is, no matter how troublesome it is, no matter how many anxiety inducing and causing situations and circumstances are in your life at that moment but you can still have peace through Christ even though you don't understand it. But we can only have this peace if we are at peace with God. Something I heard one time was peace with God leads to the peace of God, or peace with God allows us to experience peace from God. But the only way we can have the peace from God is if we are first at peace with God, and that can only happen by being reconciled to him through his Son Jesus Christ.

And so if you have never repented of your sins and put your faith in Christ, you have not made your peace with God, or it hasn't been made through Christ's sacrifice, then you can't know the peace that Christ would offer you. If you have any questions about this, if I could pray for you in any way, if you have anything going on in your life and I can minister to you in any way, I will be up front after service and I would consider it a privilege to be able to speak with you.

*Father, we thank you for these hard verses to read this morning. As challenging as they are, I do think that they are wonderful encouragements for those times when we might be forced to choose Christ over even our family members. And so when those situations arise, thank you for that privilege which is what it is. It obviously doesn't feel that way at the moment. We remember a few times when it felt very painful and felt more like a trial or almost a curse than a privilege, but help us to keep in mind, Lord, the blessing it is to be able to communicate to you through our actions. After all Christ has done for us, we're thankful for those times when he would allow us to serve him in this way. And so help us to rise to those occasions when we face them, and I pray, Lord, that we would be able to discern how you would have us handle any family members at times that might be drawing us away from your Son, to navigate through those circumstances in a gracious way that could allow us to remain a witness to those people. We thank you for your Son and what he's done for us, Lord, and pray for no other reason than we would obey these verses to give him the glory he deserves. And we ask this in his name. Amen.*

Please stand with me for the reading of God's Word and turn to **Luke 12:49**.

**Luke 12:49** "I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! **50 I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished! 51 Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. 52 For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. 53 They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."**

You may be seated. On Sunday mornings we are working our way, verse-by-verse, through Luke's Gospel and we find ourselves at **Luke 12:49**.

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*Choosing God over Family.*"

There aren't many situations more difficult for Christians to face than those involving having to choose God over family. Consider the following:

- A relative claims to be a believer but wants to marry an unbeliever, so you're unable to support the relationship.
- A relative claims to be a believer, but is living in habitual sin, so you have to confront the person.

I know people and when they chose God over family:

- It meant supporting church discipline against a family member
- Or it meant asking a child to leave the house because that child was rebellious

As you can imagine, even though these people made the right decision, it was still excruciating.

—  
There are examples in the Old Testament of people having to choose God over family members. For example...

Moses called for the execution of the individuals responsible for constructing the Golden Calf. This meant some Israelites had to kill their own relatives...

**Exodus 32:27** [Moses] said to them, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel, 'Put your sword on your side each of you, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you **KILL HIS BROTHER AND HIS COMPANION AND HIS NEIGHBOR.**'"

This gives us a good idea of how wicked idolatry is.

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Another example involving idolatry...

King Asa was one of the greatest reformers in the Old Testament. When he purged the idolatry from the land, he even had to punish his own grandmother, because she made an idol...

**1 Kings 15:13** [Asa] removed Maacah his mother from being queen mother because she had made an abominable image for Asherah. And Asa cut down her image and burned it at the brook Kidron.

I can only imagine how much criticism King Asa might've received for banishing his own grandmother.

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You could listen to this and say...

*"Well, this is the Old Testament. It was much harsher. We are in the New Testament, which is more loving and gracious."*



But we have reached the verses in the New Testament that show that even though we aren't called to execute family members, we are still called to choose God over them.

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But before Jesus talks about choosing Him over family members, He first talks about the divisiveness of the gospel, and I'll explain why in a moment.

Look with me at **verse 49**...

**Luke 12:49 "I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled!"**

Fire represents judgment, so Jesus is saying He came to bring judgment to the earth.

This isn't how we normally think of Jesus's first coming, is it? We think about him bringing judgment at his second coming but bringing salvation at his first coming.

For example, he said...

**John 12:47 I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.**

Yes, Jesus came to save the world in his first coming...but what happens to people who reject him?

They get judged!

In the very next verse Jesus said...

**John 12:48 The one who rejects me and does not receive my words HAS A JUDGE; the word that I have spoken WILL JUDGE HIM on the last day.**

So, reject Christ, get judged, and experience the fire he brought.

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But now look at the next verse for those who RECEIVE Christ...

**Luke 12:50 I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!**

So right after talking about the judgment unbelievers will receive, Jesus talks about the judgment HE received for believers.

The baptism Jesus is referring to is the crucifixion. The word baptize means immersed, and sometimes it's used to describe being baptized, or immersed, in trials. We even talk about a baptism by fire when we're talking about people suffering. That's what Jesus is saying about himself here.

—  
Notice he said **how great is my distress until it is accomplished**, or until the cross is behind him.

Because Jesus is God in the flesh we can lose sight of his humanity. But right here we see a very human response to the cross. JUST THINKING ABOUT being crucified was greatly distressing to him.

We know that Jesus's distress became even worse as his death approached. In the garden it was so bad he sweat drops of blood...

**Luke 22:44 Being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.**

But despite his distress and agony at the thought of going to the cross this was the reason he came and he was determined to do it.

—  
Notice how Jesus tied these two great events together:

- The judgment of unbelievers
- The judgment He received for believers

He tied them together because his suffering on the cross is the only way we can escape the fire to come upon the earth. So there's a clear association between the two.

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Right now following Christ sounds really good, because we can avoid judgment.

But Christ also wants us to know that following him comes at a cost, and that cost can be division from our own family members. Look at **verse 51**...

**Luke 12:51 Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.**

This is an interesting verse, because it introduces a view of Jesus that contradicts not only what the world believes, but even what many in the church believe. Here's what I mean...

There are unbelievers who don't believe Jesus is the Son of God, but if they hear you:

- Condemn sin
- Preach repentance
- Discuss judgment or punishment, especially hell
- Talk about God's wrath or anger

They're going to quickly pipe up about Jesus being a man of peace. They might have never wanted anything to do with Jesus earlier, but the moment they can use him to defend their beliefs they're going to do that.

But here's what's interesting...

There is a lot of truth in what they're saying:

- The announcement in **Luke 2:14** when Jesus came was, "**Glory to God in the highest, and ON EARTH PEACE.**"
- **Ephesians 2:17** says Jesus "**Came and preached peace.**"
- He regularly told people, "**Go in peace.**"
- He told his disciples, "**My peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you.**"
- He taught, "**These things I have spoken to you that IN ME YOU MIGHT HAVE PEACE.**"

So how do we explain this? Was Jesus a man who brought peace or division?

The answer is yes!

And this brings us to lesson one...

**Lesson one: the gospel creates (part one) peace between God and man.**

Listen to this verse...

**Romans 5:10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.**

Our sin made us God's enemies. But after we repent and put our faith in Christ we are reconciled to Him...

**Romans 5:1 Since we have been justified by faith, we HAVE PEACE WITH GOD through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

And...

**Colossians 1:20 Through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, MAKING PEACE BY THE BLOOD OF HIS CROSS.**

So the gospel brings peace between God and man.

—  
But here's the thing...

To be reconciled to God we experience division from unbelievers.

Think of it this way...

Everyone is born in the same group, and that is the group of sinful people who are separated from God. When we are reconciled to God we are separated from this group. We can't remain part of it. It is one or the other and this creates division...and brings us to the next part of lesson one...

**Lesson one: the gospel creates (part two) division between man and man.**

Listen to these verses illustrating the division that occurred over Christ during his earthly ministry...

**John 7:12 There was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, "He is a good man," others said, "No, he is leading the people astray."**

Hear the division? Some people think he's good, and others think he's bad.

So, a few verses later we read...

**John 7:43 So THERE WAS A DIVISION among the people over him.**

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Here's another example...

**John 9:16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And THERE WAS A DIVISION among them.**

—  
And another example...

**John 10:19 There was again a division among the Jews because of these words.**

So even before Jesus went to the cross he was creating division. People are finding themselves in one of two groups: those who rejected him and those who received him.

And this division played out past Christ's earthly life and will continue throughout all of human history. Everyone will find themselves in one of these two groups.

—

Listen to what happened when Jesus sent out the 12 apostles, and how it created division...

**Matthew 10:12 As you enter the house, greet it.**

How did they probably greet the house?

They probably said, “Shalom,” or “Peace be with you.” This was the common greeting of the day.

**Matthew 10:13 And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it,**

Sounds pretty good at first, doesn't it? Their peace comes upon the house. Everyone's getting along well.

Now listen to what it says...

**Matthew 10:13b but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.**

They're supposed to take their peace with them. They can't even leave it there.

And it gets worse...

**Matthew 10:14 And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town.**

The division is so strong that when the apostles left they're not supposed to bring anything with them...not even the dust.

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Listen to how Peter describes unbelievers and we get one insight into why there's division...

**1 Peter 4:3 Gentiles...living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. 4 With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and THEY MALIGN YOU.**

What does it mean that **they malign you**?

- New King James says **speak evil of you**
- NASB says **slander you**
- NIV says **abuse you**
- Amplified covers all the bases and says, **“they criticize and abuse and ridicule you and make fun of your values.”**

Basically, they're not going to treat you well when you're not doing the things they are doing.

—  
Notice how the gospel contains a tremendous irony:

- It creates peace like nothing else in the world creates peace: it creates peace between God and man.
- It creates division like nothing else in the world creates division: it divides every single person in all of human history into two completely separate groups: believers and unbelievers.

—  
And the division between the groups is so strong that it can even divide families, which Jesus tells us to expect in the following verses.

For many throughout church history embracing Christ has meant ruined relationships with family members. Look with me at **verse 52**...

**Luke 12:52 For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three.**

Notice Jesus added the words **in one house**. He could have said there will be three against two and two against three:

- In one workplace
- In one school
- In one business
- In one organization

But he says **in one house**, because he is talking specifically about division in families.

Look at **verse 53**...

**Luke 12:53 They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."**

Again, we might expect him to say...

**They will be divided:**

- Master against servant
- Student against teacher
- Player against player
- Coworker against coworker

But instead, Jesus only mentioned family members turning against each other.

Why is that?

Did Jesus not mention division in other relationships, because we're not supposed to expect division in other relationships?

No, that's not it at all. We can expect division in every area of life because of our commitment to Christ.

Jesus worded it this way because, if he expects us to choose Him over:

- Father
- Son
- Mother
- Daughter
- Mother-in-law
- Daughter-in-law

Then there is no relationship he wouldn't expect us to choose him over.

Instead of naming every imaginable relationship, he named the closest and most intimate ones and said...

*"If you want to follow me you must choose me even over these people."*

And this implies if we would choose him over these people, we would choose him over any people.

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Few things are as difficult as choosing God over family, so I would like to give you four encouragements if you find yourself having to do so.

This brings us to lesson two...

## Lesson two: choosing God over family allows us to (part one) be like Christ.

Jesus is a great example of what he preached. He demonstrated choosing God over family by teaching that the closest relationships in His life weren't with His physical family, but His spiritual family.

Briefly turn to the left to **Luke 8:19**...

**Luke 8:19 Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd.**

These **brothers** would be Jesus' half-brothers: they have the same mother, in Mary, but a different father. Joseph is their father, but God is Jesus' Father.

Jesus's family can't reach him, but...

**Luke 8:20 And he was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you."**

I want you to picture what this looked like...

Jesus is in Capernaum. His family members traveled 30 miles from Nazareth to see Him.

- I don't know the last time Jesus had seen Mary or His brothers, but it's clear they went to great lengths to reach Him.
- For all of them to be able to go together like this would've taken an amount of coordination and communication.

They arrive, but they can't get inside the house. Jesus is told they're waiting outside. So what do you expect Him to say at this moment?

- *Bring them inside! Don't make them wait out there.*
- *Oh, wow, my mother and brothers are here, I better go see them.*
- *Excuse me just for a moment – you're not going to believe this – but my family just showed up.*

Nope! Listen to what He said instead...

**Luke 8:21 But he answered them, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."**

In the parallel account in **Matthew 12:48 He [said], "WHO IS My mother and WHO ARE My brothers?"**

Before I tell you what Jesus WAS DOING, let me tell you what He WASN'T DOING...

- He wasn't rejecting or abandoning His earthly family.
- And He wasn't minimizing the importance of earthly family members.

Instead, he was emphasizing the importance of his spiritual relationships with those who obey.

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And I mention this because it's a good example for us in this discussion.

When we choose God over family members:

- We aren't rejecting or abandoning them
- We aren't minimizing their importance

Instead, we are emphasizing the importance our relationship with God.

You know that I believe God is repetitive when He wants to make sure we don't miss something. This is one of those accounts that's in all three of the synoptic Gospels...so we don't miss it.

Similarly, when Jesus spoke to Mary, there's no record of Him calling her "Mother." Instead, He always called her "Woman":

- **John 2:4 Jesus said to [Mary], "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come."**
- **John 19:26 When Jesus saw his mother...he said, "Woman, behold, your son!"**

There were two relationships between Jesus and Mary:

- The Mother and Son earthly, physical relationship
- The Sinner and Savior heavenly, spiritual relationship

It's clear which relationship Jesus emphasized, and we must do the same with our family members.

The next part of lesson two...

### Lesson two: choosing God over family allows us to (part two) teach our children

Picture the situation, which perhaps some of you have experienced. We have experienced this in our home, and so I'm sharing what we were able to do and some of the good that I was able to see from it...

You have unbelieving family members who invite your children to something:

- Maybe they invite them to a movie you don't want them to watch
- Maybe they invite them to do something you're uncomfortable with
- Maybe they simply invite them over, but you're not sure what's going to happen so you're forced to say they can't go

And then maybe your children get upset with you.

But think of the wonderful teaching opportunity this provides. You can sit down with your children and say...

- *"Do you think this is what Christ would want for you?"*
- *"As your parents this is one of our most important stewardships. We want to be wise and only have you do what he wants."*
- *"Our greatest love and loyalty has to be reserved for the Lord. That's why we made this decision."*

This allows our children to see our faithfulness to Christ, and they might remember this for a long time. Hopefully they'll be encouraged to make the same decision in the future with their children.

The next part of lesson two...

### Lesson two: choosing God over family allows us to (part three) discuss our faith.

Let's go back to the previous example and say that we didn't just upset our children. Let's say the family members got upset too. This can provide a wonderful opportunity to talk to them about our faith. We can say...

*"I'm very sorry that this upset you, and I understand why it did, but as Christians we believe..."*

Then explain the motivation behind the decision. At best they'll see where we're coming from and possibly have a change of heart. At worst they'll be angry, but at least they'll remember we had the courage to do what we thought God wanted us to do.

They might disagree, but at least they won't think we're hypocrites. And hopefully they will even respect your convictions.

—  
The next part of lesson two...

### Lesson two: choosing God over family allows us to (part four) show God we love Him.

When situations arise and we have to choose between God or family members, there's really no choice. Our greatest love and commitment must be to Christ.

It's easy to say we love God, but choosing Him over family members allows us to demonstrate that truth.

Think about this for a moment...

When we choose God over family members, it's painful, but it's also...what?

It's a privilege, because of what it communicates to the Lord:

- Our love for him
- Our loyalty to him
- Our commitment to him

—  
Go to **Luke 14:26**...

**Luke 14:26** "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

In Scripture, the word hate doesn't always mean hate. Sometimes it is used to create a contrast, or to elevate one thing above another. It's not even necessarily that one thing is devalued or demoted. Instead, it's that one thing is given greater value or promoted. For example...

**Romans 9:13** As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

This is a quote of **Malachi 1:2-3** and it sounds pretty bad!

It's not referring to an actual, emotional hatred, so much as it's figurative language to describe God choosing Jacob over Esau, and as a result Jacob received all the blessings that Esau didn't. So in contrast it could look like God loved one and hated the other...but that's not literally the case.

It's the same with **Luke 14:26**. Jesus didn't mean we should hate our parents, spouse and children, and that's obvious because that would contradict numerous verses, and some of Jesus's own words about loving others, including our enemies...so how much more our own family members?

But again, the idea is when contrasting our love for the Lord with the love we have for others, including family members, our love for the Lord should be so much greater it would almost appear as though we hate them.

—  
Let me conclude with this...



Not only does the gospel create peace between God and man, but it also creates peace FOR man...

**Philippians 4:6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And THE PEACE OF GOD, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

For those in Christ we can experience a peace that surpasses understanding. This means no matter what we experience:

- No matter how difficult...
- No matter how painful...
- No matter how troublesome and anxiety causing...

We can have a peace that surpasses all understanding ...which is to say we don't even understand why we're experiencing it.

But we can only have this peace from God if we're at peace with God.

I have heard it said peace with God leads to the peace of God.

But before we can have the peace of God we must first be at peace with God and that requires being reconciled to him through his Son Jesus Christ.

If you have never repented and put your faith in Christ, which is to say you have not yet been reconciled to God and made peace with him, or if you have any questions about anything I shared this morning, I'd consider it a privilege to speak with you after service.

Let's pray.