

+ Mark 3:20-36 + Who Is Jesus' Real Family? + 2nd Sunday after Pentecost + 10 June 2012 +

Who is your “real family”? I’m not suggesting you were switched at birth, but who do you consider your “real” family? You probably think first of those physically related to you or related to you by adoption—your parents or grandparents, your brothers or sisters. Perhaps you think of your spouse or your children or grandchildren. All of us come from a real physical family. We wouldn’t be here if we didn’t, but not all of us consider our immediate family to be our “real family”.

Let’s step back for a moment. Perhaps you have a close friend with no blood relation to you, but you look at him like a brother or her like a sister. Perhaps there’s someone whom you look up to like a parent, even though they’re not your biological parent. Are they your “real family”?

What about your fellow members and friends here at Cross of Christ or your fellow Christians around the globe? I often describe our congregation as a big “family”, apart from the fact that quite a few actually are related. In a way, you and I can say we are members of the same family here at Cross of Christ, because we are a “family” connected by faith in Jesus.

Sometimes the worries and fears and distractions of this life end up nearly separating you from your spiritual “family” and your loving Savior. Perhaps people close to you in your own life have even tried to pull you away from your spiritual “family”. That’s what people very close to Jesus tried to do to him, but Jesus didn’t allow himself to be pulled away from his “real family”. For that we give thanks, but **WHO IS JESUS’ REAL FAMILY?**

Jesus had traveled throughout the region of Galilee. He had driven out evil spirits and healed people with every disease. He had preached with a divine authority that no other rabbi had. Some thought Jesus to be the promised Son of David. Others wanted to make him king. All this began to rile up the local religious leaders. They sought ways to trap Jesus and discredit him. They even plotted with their own enemies to kill him! With all that swirling around, Jesus returned to the city of Capernaum, the home base of his ministry, where another big crowd gathered to see him.

At the same time, his mother and brothers were traveling north from Nazareth, but they weren’t coming up to sit at Jesus’ feet. You see, as reports of Jesus’ miracles and the opposition of the religious leaders traveled to Nazareth, his natural family grew concerned over the amount of attention their son and oldest brother was getting. Unfortunately, that concern wasn’t for the Messiah to accomplish his mission. No, it was a misguided concern for the mental health and physical safety of their family member. They didn’t understand who he was or why he had come. They thought, **“He’s out of his mind!”** So they traveled to Capernaum with a strait jacket and even force to bring Jesus home to save him from himself.

Who is Jesus’ real family? Was it his natural family? Sadly, no. What’s sad about it all is they should’ve known better. More specifically, Mary should’ve known better. Did not the angel Gabriel appear to Mary to inform her she would be the virgin mother of the Son of God? Did not total strangers from sheep pastures and faraway places visit her family to worship her eldest? Did not her eldest son debate with the greatest religious scholars in the land at the age of 12? Did not her eldest son change plain water into wine at a local wedding? You scratch your head and wonder at Mary’s failure to realize who her Son was and what he had come to do. To Jesus’ natural family, he was merely brother Yeshua and nothing more. **“Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked.**” Sadly, not them.

Isn’t it heartbreaking to see how Jesus has to react to his own physical relatives? Because of their misguided unbelief, they were determined to stop Jesus’ preaching, but he wasn’t going to allow them to do that. By rejecting their plans, Jesus actually showed them pure grace. They didn’t deserve such a Savior. They denied his divinity and thought him insane, but he rescued his natural family along with you and me so that one day those blood relatives would actually be numbered with his followers.

Such love of the loveless, such self-sacrifice to rescue the unworthy, makes no sense to those around us, even to our own human reason. Still today countless people consider Jesus a lunatic who babbled about God’s love for the world and died an unnecessary death. These same people consider the followers of Jesus to be just as insane. Perhaps you know people like that. Perhaps they’re even part of your own family. Perhaps they object to what you believe. “How can there be such grace or such a loving God when the world is such a bad place?”

Grace doesn’t make sense, because it comes from the heart of God and not the minds of mankind. You can’t wrap your logical reason around illogical, irrational grace. Why would a holy God give up his greatest treasure—the life of his one and only Son—to rescue a dead, hostile, corrupt humanity from the stinking filth of

sin that we all love to bathe in every day? Why would a holy God punish his holy Son for our obnoxious disobedience? Why would a holy God give up his greatest treasure to rescue me—a blind, dead, hostile descendant of Adam? It was God's grace and grace alone. It doesn't make sense, but yet God still pours out grace upon grace on sinners like you and me so we die to sin and live!

The crowds that day in Capernaum not only included Jesus' family, but a group of his bitterest opponents—a group you would actually expect to be his greatest allies. Those men should've known better too. They were the biblical scholars of the Jewish people. They knew the Old Testament inside and out. They knew all the promises about the Messiah. They knew Jesus matched every one of those promises, but still they accused Jesus of being a member of the worst family—Satan's. Those leaders questioned the power of Jesus and claimed that his power came not from God, but from **“Beelzeboul”** – a name for Satan that means “Lord of Dung”. They claimed, **“Jesus has an evil spirit that makes him unclean.”**

So how did Jesus react? Not in anger as we would expect, but in loving concern for their souls. Again God's grace doesn't make sense, because it shows love for his enemies. Jesus wanted his enemies to see how foolish their accusations were. **“How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come.”** Civil war never strengthens a nation, but destroys it. Strife in a family between parents and children, husband and wife, brother and sister never strengthens a family, but destroys it. How foolish to think Satan would fight himself!

Who is Jesus' real family? Definitely not Satan's family! In fact, Jesus has rendered Satan powerless. Every time Jesus cast out an evil spirit he accomplished that. Every time he resisted temptation he defeated Satan again. He even accomplished that in death as he crushed the serpent's head and the Tempter's power over you and me forever. Ultimately Jesus completed his mission with his final victory over death on Easter.

The leaders should have known better. In gracious love the Savior sought to help them realize it. Jesus warned them against stubbornly speaking against God. He knew that lifelong blasphemy could lead to eternal death in hell, yet in the midst of that warning, Jesus poured out his grace. **“I tell you the truth, every single sin will be forgiven to the sons of men and whatever blasphemies they may utter.”** Spawn of Satan? I don't think so!

Jesus' warning applies to you and me too. As a Christian, you have all the fulfilled promises of God's Word. You have countless assurances and examples of God's grace, but do you ever wonder what God could possibly be thinking when he allows trouble to enter your life? Do you ever wonder if God is being unfair or unjust for allowing you or your loved ones to endure pain or hardship or uncertainty or fear when perhaps the Lord is using them for good? Be careful that you do not stubbornly fall into a pattern of speaking against your gracious God, but give thanks that the God who guides all things for your good also has free and full forgiveness for you through your Savior, who was not a member of Satan's family, but Satan's Conqueror.

So **who is Jesus' real family?** It is **his adopted family!** At the very end of our text, Jesus looks around at those seated around him and says, **“Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.”** When Jesus looked around the room that day, he didn't just see the tanned faces of Galilean dads and moms and brothers and sisters. He saw your face there too. “Here is my brother.” “Here is my sister.” “Here is my mother.” **“Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.”** How could Jesus say that? They weren't his blood relatives and neither are you. Yet Jesus could say that because by grace, he made them and you members of his adopted family. Not because you earned or deserved it, not because you attend Cross of Christ, but because he made you his son, his daughter through faith in him.

So are you really part of that family? The answer is “Yes”. On the day of your Baptism, Jesus welcomed you into his family with open arms. He made you his brother, his sister, his son, his daughter. He transformed you into a living child of God. Now by grace you enjoy the blessings of membership in Jesus' family. Forgiveness for your every sin—that's yours through your brother Jesus. Hope and strength amidst the hardships of this life—yours through your brother Jesus. A firm foundation for your life in a constantly changing world—yours through your brother Jesus. Life that will last long after your eyes close in death—yours through your brother Jesus. Grace upon grace makes you and me members of Jesus' family.

Who is Jesus' “real” family? By grace, you are his family and will continue to be as you faithfully follow him to the end of your life. **“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what you are!”** (1 John 3:1) Amen.