

NEW BEGINNINGS LUTHERAN CHURCH

Third Sunday after Pentecost – June 9th, 2024 (11:11 am)
WHO ARE MY MOTHER AND MY BROTHERS?

Psalm 130
Genesis 3:8-15
2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1
Mark 3:20-35

Jesus Has Defeated the Devil and Released Us from the Bondage of Sin and Death

The devil deceived us, enticing us to disregard and disobey the Word of God and driving us to hide *“from the presence of the LORD God.”* But the Lord, in His mercy, promised a Savior, who would set Himself against the devil on our behalf (Gen. 3:8-15). The Son of Man came, the incarnate Son of God, conceived and born of the woman. He *“first binds the strong man,”* Satan, by atoning for the sins of the world, thereby removing the condemnation of the Law and the fear of death (Mark 3:27). Now He plunders the devil’s house by calling all men to repent. Though He appears to be *“out of his mind”* (Mark 3:21), He fulfills the will of God and makes of us His own brothers and sisters. Therefore, *“we do not lose heart,”* despite the suffering, sin and death that we experience in this fallen world. *“He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus.”* By His grace, we are *“being renewed day by day.”* For the Gospel is daily bringing us into His presence, not for punishment, but for *“an eternal weight of glory”* (2 Cor. 4:14-17).

Have you ever accused someone of being out of their mind? Probably. We are not unaccustomed to making such a statement about people we know today. A friend of yours takes a bungee jump off a high tower, and you ask, *“Has he gone out of his mind?”* On a lark, another friend takes a sky diving lesson and jumps out of a perfectly good airplane, and you ask, *“Has she gone out of her mind?”* A person of modest income decides to purchase a house obviously beyond his means, and you ask, *“Has he gone out of his mind?”* There are lots of situations in which we might ask that question of someone we know, but we are shocked when someone asks that question of Jesus. In verse 21, we learn that people were saying, ***“He is out of his mind”, or “He is insane” or better “He is crazy”.***

First, we perceived that his family was alarmed. We might suggest that they were merely concerned with Jesus. However, I think that the family had a lack of sympathy for the nature of Jesus’ ministry. We read in John 7:5, ***“For not even his brothers believed in him.”***

Some people believe Jesus performed many miraculous deeds all of his life. I understand that he grew up as a normal boy. His brothers who lived with him just thought of him as a brother. They were surprised when he began preaching. When they learned of

some of the things he was saying, they wanted him to quit. They came as a group ready to seize him, get him away from the crowds. When they finally arrived, there was such a crowd that they could not get in to see him. They sent him a message, but he left them standing on the outside, **“Who are my mother and my brothers?”** He acknowledged no special relationship or obligation to them.

Jesus also alarmed the Pharisees, but we are much more familiar with their negative reactions. The Pharisees from Jerusalem had made the considerable journey to Galilee to investigate this Jesus sensation. They said his power was not good. He had been taken over by Beelzebul, an unclean, satanic, demonic spirit. They warned the crowds about him.

Their reaction led Jesus to make his statement about the unpardonable sin. It’s a statement that has frequently been misinterpreted and has unnecessarily disturbed many people.

Lots of people worry that they have committed unpardonable sins. When you become aware of the consequences of sin, you often feel that your sin is unforgivable. Usually, that really means that we can’t forgive ourselves. I believe God is much more forgiving of our sins than we are.

If we read the passage carefully, we will find that Jesus was saying that the religious leaders could not tell the difference between God’s work and Satan’s work.

William Barclay¹ explains it this way: *“If a man, by repeated refusals of God’s guidance, has lost the ability to recognize goodness when he sees it, if he has got his moral values inverted until evil to him is good and good to him is evil, then, even when he is confronted by Jesus, he is conscious of no sin; he cannot repent and therefore he can never be forgiven.”* I understand the only unforgivable sin is to refuse the forgiveness of God. Those who refuse to accept the provision of salvation offered by Christ, those who refuse to throw themselves on the mercy of God, those who refuse Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord are the only ones who have committed the unpardonable sin.

“WHO ARE MY MOTHER AND MY BROTHERS?” (Mark 3:33)

What do you make of that? On the surface, it seems like such a harsh thing to say. Did Jesus mean to reject his family altogether? No. Jesus didn’t deny the relationship he had with his biological family; he merely expanded the family circle to include any number of others. He pointed to a spiritual, rather than a physical, kinship as the basis for life in the kingdom of God. Paul echoed Jesus’ sentiments when he wrote to the Romans, **“For all who**

¹ William Barclay - The New Daily Study Bible – The Gospel of Mark, 2017.

are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God". (Romans 8:14). Of course, we know that Jesus spoke as God, Saviour and Messiah – from His divine nature.

The Spirit of God unites us as a family in a bond of love able to withstand the storms of life and last throughout all eternity. It transcends the boundaries of age, race, nationality and gender. It encompasses people from every station and walk of life.

Jesus didn't deny the claim of his family on his life, but he did set the limits of their authority over him. And specifically, about Mary – and, if he were still living, Joseph – Jesus defined the boundaries of parenthood.

Here is a hard sentence we need to hear, both as children and as parents. From earliest childhood we're taught to respect our father and mother. It's spelled out clearly in the *4th Commandment*: **"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you."** (Exodus 20:12)

But there's a difference between honouring your father and mother and giving them ultimate authority over your life. The parental authority must always be subordinate to the authority of God.

For one thing, parental wisdom is prone to error and parental love is often tempered by the need to control. Parents, however, devoted to their children, are only human.

More importantly, while we're children of our parents, we're also children of God, and, as we grow in our relationship with God, we're called to seek God's will for our lives and follow the leading of God's Spirit, even when it means overriding the wishes of our parents.

It happens all the time: A son chooses a different line of work instead of joining his father's business; a woman chooses to marry a man her parents don't approve of; couples decide to have children – or not to have children – over their parents' wishes; and even deciding the candidate you are going to vote for in an election can be a problem.

Listening to God rather than mom or dad is never easy. Even after they're gone, the memory of their admonitions can have a binding effect on our lives. It requires a lot of faith and strong conviction to respect the boundaries of parenthood yet heed the voice of God. Honour your father and your mother (*4th commandment*) but give your ultimate allegiance to God (*1st commandment*).

Why is it so hard, to let go of our kids? As parents, we figured it was our responsibility to provide for the kids and protect them from danger ... nurture them in their development ... to encourage and support them until they were on their own. Like teaching a child to ride a bicycle, you run alongside with one hand on the seat as the child gets the hang of it and establishes their sense of balance. We do our best to keep them from falling. And as long

as you're holding on, you feel a sense of importance. You know you're needed. Children give their parents a healthy dose of self-esteem.

At the end of our passage in the Gospel today, Jesus turns again to address the issue of the family when he asks, ***"Behold, my mother and my brothers?"*** In his reply, Jesus offered a redefinition of family, and in the process gave a great definition of the church. He portrays a vision of the family of God. Jesus acknowledges that discipleship may cost our old, natural family ties. But if we do the will of God, we will discover ourselves as members of the new family of God.

Despite Jesus' disappointment that his family and the scribes rejected him, he proclaims the good news that all who do the will of God will be accepted into the family of God.

Jesus' statement moves the value of human relationships beyond the physical to the spiritual.

For Jesus, faith is the most important gift received by grace from God and this is the most precious gift that the human being could receive. It is a change of vision about our relationship with the world, with our blood family from a strong relationship with God, The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, by faith. Amen.