

Mark 3:31 Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. 32 And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You." 33 But He answered them, saying, "Who is My mother, or My brothers?" 34 And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! 35 For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother." (NKJV)

I was raised in an era when the church in America, as a whole, was not doing a very good job **in teaching parents** how to raise children. There weren't many books or resources on the topic. There was no internet. There were no dvds or even vhs. In fact, there weren't even tape players. If it wasn't on a record or a radio, parents weren't going to hear about it.

At the same time tv was gaining popularity. So there was a new device that would pump the world into Christian's living rooms day after day. And the public schools had a much different environment than our parents remembered from their school days. This created an environment that was very difficult for my parent's generation. They were not equipped to deal with the changes that were happening to the family, and in many cases they weren't even **fully aware** of the dangers.

And my generation became the first to be raised by the television. At least that is my perspective on that time, based on limited knowledge.

So out of that vacuum of focus and resources grew organizations whose sole purpose was **to right that wrong**. So the pendulum swung from one side, where there was little focus given to **raising a family by Christian means** to the other side where **a Christians primary, and some would even say sole responsibility is to raise a Christian family**. We tend to live in that world.

We now have lots of tools to help us raise our kids. We have resources that challenge us not to accept what the world is throwing at us. We even have good resources that challenge even how our society picks a mate. It is a lot of good stuff, stuff I could have used growing up.

But along with all that I fear there is a danger. The danger is making storge' family, physical blood line family, the **highest priority** in our lives. How many times have you heard a Christian man say "my most important ministry is to my wife and family?" But have you ever read that in scripture? We are in danger of deifying the "me and mine" mentality that goes with that. And what that leads to is an abandonment of the church and our duty towards it.

We live in two kingdoms, an **earthly** kingdom and a **heavenly** one. We have **laws** we must abide by as citizens of the United States. We also have **duties** to that kingdom. The same is true of our heavenly kingdom. But the heavenly kingdom

is of a **higher** priority. It is eternal in its scope. The United States kingdom is temporary. The Kingdom of God is permanent.

In the same way we have 2 families. We have a flesh and bloodline family that we were born into and that we have born children into. It comes with very clear responsibilities. There are duties a husband must do, duties a wife must do, duties a father must do, duties a mother must do, and duties children must do. We fail Christ if we do not perform those duties in the manner he tells us to perform them. But that is not the **highest** duty. That is not the ultimate family. This family is temporary. There is nothing in the Bible I remember reading that says there will be any bloodline divisions in heaven.

John Piper has a book that is called *This Momentary Marriage*. The title captures the essence of his perspective. An earthly marriage is temporary. Some spouses can make it **seem** like an eternity, but it is not. It is only until death do we part. And our lives, according to scripture, are like the lifespan of grasses in the field, like the time it takes for smoke to dissipate. They are short from the perspective of eternity.

That is what our Storge families are. They are temporary. So they are not as important as the family that lasts forever. The family that lasts forever is the church family. And I believe that is what our text is about to show us.

Now remember that last week the text mentioned that Jesus's family had heard about what was going on.

Mark 3:21 But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, "He is out of His mind." (NKJV)

So the family intended to set Christ straight. They were going to exhibit some tough love to one of their clan. We have all been in the situation where we know a confrontation is coming, and we know that it will go amiss because affronted party is carrying all the wrong assumptions. And since it will not be a profitable conversation, it is sometimes worth completely avoiding.

Mark 3:31 says Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him.

Matt 12:46 says While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him.

OK, so we have been told what the intentions are of the people wanting to interrupt this meeting. Jesus's family probably has very good intentions. They are simply taking their assumptions and applying them to their family. But, as we said last week, they are very wrong.

So Jesus is in a house ministering to a multitude. People are sitting in every area a person can sit. So there is no way that Jesus's family can get close.

So evidently the family tried to send a messenger to Christ to get his attention. They are essentially summoning Christ to come outside and speak with them. Then they plan to tell Christ what He needs to do.

Think of this as the compulsion of family obligations.

They probably think that when they call Christ outside, Christ should be compelled by duty to his family to tippee on out there in a hurry and respectfully listen to His mother and brothers. They probably expected their call to Christ to cause Christ to drop everything He was doing and prioritize them. After all, didn't His family go out of their way for Him? They probably travelled 30 miles to get there. Imagine that. Imagine if your family walked 30 miles to get where you are teaching. And they are outside waiting for you. That was the real setting.

Mary, Christ's mother, and James, Joses, Judah, and Simon, Christ's half-brothers along with his half-sister are waiting for Christ to respond to their summons. One can imagine their hands on their hips. At first they were probably conveying an attitude of concern for Christ, but as time went on we can imagine they were getting more irritated by the moment.

Let's read both accounts to the end.

Mark 3:32 And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You." 33 But He answered them, saying, "Who is My mother, or My brothers?" 34 And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! 35 For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother." (NKJV)

Matthew 12: 47 Then one said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You." 48 But He answered and said to the one who told Him, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" 49 And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! 50 For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother." (NKJV)

Look how Christ responds. Now keep in mind that in their culture **children had a great obligation to their families and parents**, even into adulthood. Those in the crowd likely felt very uncomfortable now. They are waiting for Christ to respond to this summons. When we read both accounts we see that it starts with one person conveying the news that Christ's family is outside waiting for Him. And then the crowd joins in. You can just see it. Everyone is uncomfortable with what Christ is doing. He is not being polite. He probably just went right on teaching. And then, as if Christ was stupid, people start reminding Him that His family is outside

waiting. They might be assuring Christ that it is ok if you interrupt this. After all, these are your family.

What we have here are three examples to learn from.

The first is the crowd. When someone appears to have their priorities fixed on the right thing, when they are walking primarily concerned with what God Himself would have him do, we would do well to not assume that we know how to live that person's life better than that person does. Here the crowd thinks they know what Jesus should do more than Jesus does. Their discomfort with his departure from the norm causes them to get bossy. They try to get Jesus to conform to their expectations of what He should do.

How often do we feel like this? We see others around us and they are not getting with the program. They are not prioritizing what we prioritize. They are living differently than we live. And God forbid that they might be sacrificing their own comfort for the kingdom of God. Maybe they refuse to talk about petty things, being absorbed with more important things. Maybe they come across as anti-social, just because they have little appetite for small talk. Maybe they seem a bit tactless in their conversations, because they truly watch out for Christ's glory and they feel the need to point out things that do not glorify Christ at the expense of people's comfort. This is what often happens when God really gets hold of a person. How do we respond to our discomfort? Do we act just like the crowd here, trying to get Christ to perform according to normal expectations?

We would do well not to. We ought to take our lead from the person most absorbed with God's will. At least we should challenge our assumptions before we place judgment on another follower. The crowd should have said nothing in this case. They should have just watched.

The second example is Christ's family. And they, too, are a bad example. In what ways do we expect our family members to conform to our expectations, even when those expectations have nothing to do with what God cares about?

I really like it when my kids and their spouses, and especially their children come to our house for a holiday. I really like having them all together and playing a card game at the dining room table. But at the same time, God does not say they must be there. And if at any time any of them would become absorbed in following God in a way that would require them to miss these events, I cannot be critical. God does not say they need to be home for Christmas.

I like having Jonathan here for church on Sunday. But he has commitments to his church that demand that he be back there most Sundays. I have no right to complain or to correct him.

Before we seek to correct our family members, we do well to ask ourselves, why am I doing this? Why do I feel compelled to set them straight? We will often find

that our response is more about what **we** want than what **God** wants. We want conformity because it makes our lives easier, or more pleasant, or less stressful. And we often use the authority we have been given for **all the wrong reasons** and to accomplish **all the wrong things**. Sometimes there should be discomfort in our homes. We need the discomfort of finding out that what we are doing is wrong. We need the discomfort of disclosure when we are trying to keep sin hidden. We need the discomfort of conflict when there is injustice happening right under our own roofs. We need to do the hard work of making sure we use whatever authority we have to aid in making people more holy, not of making ourselves and our surroundings more happy. There is a great deal of discomfort that is necessary in our families for holiness to have its proper place.

How do you think Christ's family felt when the messenger came back out and told the family what Christ said? I'd bet they were furious. Can you imagine the 30 mile walk home? They were coming there **to save** the day, and Christ wouldn't so much as give them **the time** of day. Yet, even though they may have felt so offended, it is truly **they** who were the offenders. Had they believed in who Christ really was, they would not have been so presumptive.

The third example is Christ. And His, naturally, is a great example.

First, look at what His life is steeped in. He is doing direct ministry. He is preaching the truth to everyone. He is doing miracles. And He is doing all of this at great expense to Himself.

Basically, Christ is fully involved in doing the will of His Father. It isn't like he was absorbed with hobbies and distraction. He was doing those things that God most wanted done.

So He knows that His family are outside, ready to dress him down. He has probably known about this before his family even thought about it. He knows that His family is absolutely wrong in their assessment. They need to change. They need to repent. And they need to get with the program. What they need most right now is to change from their wrong behavior. They need that more than they need a few minutes with Christ. And Christ is going to serve notice to this fact in a very forceful means. He is not even going to give them the satisfaction of having his audience.

Christ also knows that nothing they are going to say is going to be helpful. He is in the center of God's will and is not about to be distracted from it. That is the beauty of knowing you are doing what God wants you to do. You can turn a bit of a deaf ear to those who are unfairly critical.

Think about this. How hard would it have been for Christ to go outside and talk to His family? Really, it could not have been that hard. He had a perfect opportunity

to keep the peace. He could have catered to His families demands and smoothed things over. But he would not. In fact, what he did exacerbated the problem. He did nothing to sooth that sore. What He did made it worse.

There are times with other people where the worst thing we can do is keep the peace. The worst thing we can do is cater to their demands. Those are **often points of opportunity**. When a person has expectations upon us that are not godly expectations, when they are selfish expectations created by their own fleshly desires and motives, often the best thing we can do is to make the problem blow up. We must respond in a way that **says we are not willing to accept responsibility for such wrong expectations**. And do it in such a way to make our point most strongly.

If Christ would have gone out to His family, they would likely have kept the opinion that **they could interfere with Christ's ministry in the future** whenever they felt the need. The way Christ handled it, you could rest assured that they would never assume this again. They were never going to walk 30 miles to make demands of Him. Those days are officially over. Christ did not go out with them and appeal to them. He didn't speak to them. He simply ignored them.

Some times when we are confronting stubborn demanding attitudes from others, we must do the same thing. We must do the thing that will cause that behavior to end. Normally that is going to make things very stressful and very uncomfortable, just like Christ's family. But it is going to push the situation to a resolution and it will drive all parties to **have their best shot** at seeing the truth about themselves before God. To cater to demanding expectations may seem kind and loving, but it is really just cowardice and foolishness. We should never accept the blame for conflict or turmoil or emotional upheaval when all we are doing is rejecting a person's unrealistic expectations of us. When we accept that kind of blame in the interest of keeping peace we are just lying. Christ would have none of that. He did not teach us mamby pamby attempts at avoiding conflict by catering to demanding people. What **He** showed us was a commitment to doing what His Father wanted Him to do and an intolerance of those who would make other demands upon Him. He was not going to dance to the fiddle being played for Him, even though everyone expected it. And he does not expect us to do that either. Those responses will just rob us of the true ministry He wants us to do to others.

We've got to see here that following Christ does not always make us nicer. In fact, sometimes it makes us less nice. Because it is very uncomfortable to live in the presence of truth. It is very stressful to have our true selves confronted with our need to change. And sometimes, making that point clear to ourselves or others will take us past the boiling point to where we emotionally explode. Being nice would avoid that unpleasantness. Being loving will not.

Back to our text:

**.'' 33 But He answered them, saying, "Who is My mother, or My brothers?"
34 And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said,
"Here are My mother and My brothers! 35 For whoever does the will of God
is My brother and My sister and mother." (NKJV**

Look at this closely. We learn a couple of things.

First, look how Christ prioritizes the Family of God over the storge' family. He has his family tree calling from outside. And He points around to say, "this is the Family that most matters to me. These are the relations I prioritize." Why? Because they are spiritual and they are eternal. This is a family that is not created by a man fulfilling his natural earthly desires. This is a family that is created by a miracle of God. It is a family of infused faith. And it is a family that shares all the same Father, our Father in heaven. And the Father has selected each and every member of this family to play a part.

I think we make a huge mistake when we regard our earthly families the same way we regard the church. Christ clearly showed a different priority. In fact, he displayed it in a way that the priorities of one would often cost the pleasures of the other.

Christ said things like this:

Luke 14:26 "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. (NKJV)

Don't you think, if you were looking on, that you might have thought Christ hated his family. But clearly He did not. Remember when Christ told John to look after his mom after Christ died? For that to be a detail that he covered in the suffering He was going through shows that it was a very important obligation. The point is that when the higher priorities trump the lower ones, it will sometimes look like hatred in contrast.

Scripture commands us to take care of our families.

1 Timothy 5:8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (NKJV)

Those are strong words. We cannot, in any way, get the idea that following Christ frees us from our obligation to do our duties toward our families. In fact, we are commanded in just how we are to carry out those duties. There is specific ink given for that purpose.

It is important that we don't get confused about this. The church is not there to do your duty to your family. You must do your duty. That is part of your Christian commitment. But you are to be doing that duty in the context of a church, where people in that Body have meaningful relationships with those in your family.

When this happens you have the gifts of the body of Christ being used for the benefit of those in your household. That is how it is supposed to happen. But when the two priorities of Christ's family and our earthly family come into conflict, it is very clear which one we must choose.

Matthew 10:34 "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. 35 For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; 36 and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' 37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.
(NKJV)

We see here that Christ's primary priority was not to improve our bloodline families. He didn't come to cater to them. They are not his primary focus. His Kingdom, His heavenly family is the primary focus. And sometimes bloodline families will be absolutely torn in half due to the priority of the heavenly family. And Christ doesn't back down at all on this. He doesn't show sympathy about that dilemma. Ultimately He knows His own worth. He knows the value of the Family of God. So he says, if you are so attached to your bloodline family, so be it. You are not worthy of being part of His Heavenly Family.

Christ made this extremely clear. Our loyalties must be with Christ. We cannot allow other attachments to supersede our attachment to Him. And I think that some of the ways that our Christian culture deals with family is very misleading. They are swinging the pendulum back further than it should go. It makes **too much** of family and would have people believing that **their only** ministry is to their family. And pretty soon, the earthly bloodline family takes the place of the Heavenly Family. And no good can come of that.

I don't pretend to know how all this should look as we flesh it out. But it is clear that our bloodline families should be raised in the context of our heavenly family. And we need to always keep in mind which one Christ prioritizes. We have duties to both. But ultimately, only one last forever and only one Father is worthy of our worship.

Second, notice how Christ defines a believer.

A member of the Family of God, a believer is one who what?

35 For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother."

A believer is one who obeys the Father. That is nothing new. We have looked at this over and over again. So does that mean that a believer earns their salvation by

obeying God? Absolutely not. Nothing could be further from the truth. A person can never earn their salvation period.

Does it mean that a believer obeys God perfectly? Absolutely not. I John tells us if we say we have not sinned we are a liar.

But what **do** we know about a believer? They are new creatures. They are born again. And they are given **the power** to obey and **the desire** to obey. They have new hearts. If you find a person who refuses to obey God persistently and consistently, you are not looking at a believer, no matter how good their theology is.

But if a person **is** a believer, they will obey God. They won't do it perfectly. But they will do it persistently and consistently.

Don't ever buy into any definition of a Christian that defies what Christ says here. Whoever does the will of the Father is a son of the Father.

I think the Lord has given us a lot to chew on this week. Let me ask in closing, what one change are you convicted to make this week due to what you have heard? If there is something clear, I urge you to write it down, and make it part of your week to see to it that you implement that change in whatever way you can do it. Don't lose it before you walk out the door.