



**Matthew 12:46-50**

**When Family Becomes an Idol**

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

**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."**

I know you can't see it at the moment, but I am standing here before you today with a sacrificial knife in my hand, and what I would like to do today, is to use that knife to kill one of Fayetteville's most sacred cows. Now kids I should explain, a sacred cow is not a literal cow, considered by people to be holy, the way that Hindus do. So I'm not suggesting an actual animal sacrifice today. No a sacred cow is something that is held in such reverence that it can't be criticized or questioned without getting the person doing it into serious trouble. Now the big problem with sacred cows, is that they are usually individual, or organization, or institution, that in and of themselves are good, but they can be elevated in their importance to the point that they become idols.

Let me give you an example using what is probably Fayetteville MOST sacred cow - **Patriotism**. Love of country is generally a good thing, but when it is given primary importance, and held to be something we should always express no matter what, it can be terribly dangerous. For instance, totalitarian governments like the Nazis and the Soviets manipulated patriotism to get their people to do incredibly wicked things all in the name of love of the Fatherland or the Motherland.

But patriotism is not the sacred cow that Jesus is talking about in the verses we just read. The sacred cow that Jesus was talking about is... **FAMILY**. Now family is a good thing. The family is something that God Himself created in Eden before the fall. It was designed for our good, it is the primary building block of society. It is the place in which Jesus grew up and was raised to manhood. It is irreplaceable. The two parent monogamous heterosexual family is the best place for children to be raised. And everything people have tried as a substitute for the family as God designed it has not done

nearly as good a job. Satan hates families, and that's why he's always trying to destroy them or create counterfeits to replace them. No society has nor ever will survive the destruction of the institution of the family.

**The Family is GOOD, but the family is NOT GOD!** And when we put the family into a #1 most important position and give it precedence over everything else it becomes an idol. It becomes a substitute for God, it usurps the authority, the importance, and the glory that only He should have. It becomes a false God, and the Lord has proclaimed in the first commandment, ***“You shall have no other gods before Me.”***

Now I want you to see how Jesus corrects our tendency towards idolatry in these verses. First note the situation. Despite the best efforts of the Pharisees to stop him and discredit him, Jesus is still preaching the gospel to the people. Now who would be opposed to that? The devil of course! As Matthew Henry points out, ***“The devil was a sworn enemy to our Saviour's preaching. He had sought to baffle his discourse by the unreasonable cavils of the scribes and Pharisees, and when he could not gain his point that way, he endeavoured to break it off by the unseasonable visits of relations.”***

Jesus is teaching the multitudes when he is suddenly interrupted by the news that his mother and brothers have arrived.

And that still happens today whenever the gospel is being proclaimed, unsaved relations will suddenly show up, “You're not gonna just go off to your church and leave us alone are you? It's Uncle Hank's 67<sup>th</sup> birthday today and we we're gonna go out to brunch” And the restaurant they pick is inevitably 50 miles away. Or they do come to church but they're up and down, and the children are constantly playing up, and you hear nothing, and then afterwards they do their best to wipe out any spiritual good you might have gotten. You think to yourself, “coincidence”, but its not coincidence, its actually spiritual warfare.

Now just a quick note here, when the text says mother and brothers, it is referring to his mother Mary, and the sons she had with Joseph. The Roman Catholic church maintains a completely unsupportable superstition that Mary remained a virgin after giving birth to Christ, throughout her marriage to Joseph, and that therefore these boys were either sons from a previous marriage of Joseph or cousins. But the Greek word here is *adelphoi* and means male siblings. Joseph was never told by God that he could never have normal marital relations with his wife - turn with me to Matt. 1:24-25 ***Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, 25 and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.***

Till means until after, not never. And also note her firstborn Son. Matthew would not have said firstborn son if there had never been any others. But the rest of the NT makes it very clear that he step-

brothers, the normal offspring of Mary and Joseph – Paul speaks of Jesus’ brother James in Gal. 1:19 ***But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.***

Unfortunately, we also know at this point in His ministry, His brothers did not yet believe He was the Messiah, John records a later incident and says in John 7:5 ***For even His brothers did not believe in Him.***

So what has happened. Well the devil has stirred up the Pharisees, who have gone off to Mary and his brothers and said something along the lines of, ***“Do you know what your Jesus is doing? He’s stirring up all sorts of unrest and concerning the rulers and insulting the Scribes and Pharisees. You better talk some sense into him before he comes to harm!”***

And as Spurgeon put it, ***“Many a nervous mother has been ready to hold back her consecrated son when his courage has defied danger.”***

But what is actually going on, the family of Jesus is being used to interrupt the work of the kingdom. We can understand unbelieving brothers doing that. But what about Mary, his Mother? Many years earlier you remember on a trip to Jerusalem for the Passover feast they had gone up to Jerusalem and lost track of Jesus and had to go back to find and when they did Luke tells us, ***“they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.”*** Mary and Joseph though rebuke him for worrying them and Jesus responds, ***“Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?”*** We are told that Mary ***“kept all these things in her heart.”*** But as Matthew Henry points out, ***“There is many a good truth that we thought was well laid up when we heard it, which yet is out of the way when we have occasion to use it.”***

Now do you remember that earlier, when a prospective disciple had said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” How Jesus had answered? Jesus said to him, “Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.” Again and again, Jesus has said that the work of the kingdom of God has to take precedent over the demands of family. When he called James and John, the sons of Zebedee to be his disciples they were mending nets with their father, and yet they immediately got up, left their Father, and followed Jesus. I have little doubt that Zebedee was less than pleased at that moment. But the same Jesus who expects His disciples to understand that doing the will of God has to come first, isn’t about to put family first Himself. So he takes the interruption and uses it as a teaching example.

Who are my mother and my brothers, he asks those who are listening to Him? And he uses it as a teaching occasion to let them know that the truest relationship to Christ isn’t by blood, it’s by faith. It’s faith that Jesus is your Lord and Savior that marks members of Christ’s family, not DNA or a shared address. If we are members of Jesus Family, we do what Jesus always does, which is the will of the Father. And what is the will of the Father. Well Jesus tells us in:

***John 6:38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.***

***39 "This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.***

***40 "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."***

The will of the Father is that you would believe in His Son and follow Him, even when that goes AGAINST the will of your family. And note what Jesus says, this is wonderful news! Whosoever believes on Jesus and follows Him is part of the Family of God, it doesn't matter where you're from or what sins you committed, your race, your income, your education, none of that matters! It doesn't matter what you were, in Christ everything is made new. As Spurgeon said, ***"All believers in Jesus are of the royal family, princes of the blood, brothers of the Christ."***

I recently saw a film called ***God's Not Dead*** and while its Reformed I would still recommend it. I don't want to give it away, but there are a series of interconnected stories of believers who are all called to choose between doing the will of Christ, or doing what their friends and family members want them to do, and that's the choice that has been presented to believers throughout history. For instance, today, when someone from a Mormon, or a Muslim, or a Buddhist background believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and decides to follow him, their family members will do everything they can to reverse that decision.

As Thomas Watson wrote, ***"Our kindred sometimes would stand in our way to heaven, and, judging all zeal rashness, would hinder us from being saved. ... Take heed of a snare in your bosom. It is a brave saying of Jerome, 'If my parent should persuade me to deny Christ, if my mother should show me her breast that nursed me, if my wife should go to charm me with her embraces, I would forsake all, and fly to Christ.'"***

Applications: 1) Remember that in all things, God, his Kingdom, and doing His will, has to come first, and I mean in every particular. I can't tell you how many times I have seen professing Christians put the Will of God aside in order to serve the will of the family.

Parents are particularly prone to do it. For instance, I can't tell you how many times I've seen Christians who had no problem acknowledging that homosexuality was a sin and a violation of the Seventh Commandment suddenly change their minds about it when their children they were homosexuals. One day they are nodding their heads when Paul writes ***in 1 Cor. 6:9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.***

And then suddenly they are ignoring what that verse says. Danny Cortez a Southern Baptist pastor in California is told by his son that he's gay and his response was ***"My heart skipped a beat and I turned towards him and we gave one another the biggest and longest hug as we cried. And all I could tell him was that I loved him so much and that I accepted him just as he is."***

***Well Pastor, That's California what do you expect?*** Brothers and Sisters, I have seen exactly that happen with evangelicals here in Fayetteville, people who have come to this church.

People I love dearly who wouldn't dream of posting pictures of their son robbing a bank to Facebook saying "that's my boy", have proudly posted pictures of their daughter's lesbian prom date saying "Beautiful Couple."

That is not the will of God. When your child tells you they are moving in with their girlfriend, becoming an atheist, having an affair with someone else's spouse, or they have drug addiction or they are homosexual, if you want to do the will of the Father, you don't say ***"I accept you just the way you are."*** ***You can cry, but then*** You read what Paul wrote, you warn them that's sin, and you preach the gospel to them. But you don't for a moment swerve from following Christ and you don't help them to go on sinning.

Remember the father of the prodigal didn't go running to his son in the pigsty in the far country and give him more money so he could go on living sinfully, he waited at home and when God in His grace opened the eyes of his son and brought him back, then he welcomed him.

Understand this, the level of obedience that God expects of you and I, is the same that he expected of Abraham, and remember he asked Abraham to be willing to sacrifice His son Isaac to him. Abraham was willing to do that, ***Genesis 22:11 But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am."***

***12 And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."***

Had Abraham put family first he would never have taken Isaac to Mt. Moriah.

And the reason Angel of the Lord there is capitalized is because of the understanding that that is the command of Christ.

But please understand this, had God put family first, He would never have sent His Son Jesus to Calvary to die for your sins.

God is not asking you to do anything He has not already done himself. Both God the Father, and God the Son, consistently put Kingdom ahead of Family, for your sake. Will you not this day vow to do the same?

Good example – Joel Beeke's father, family worship

*50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of his parents – He and his siblings decided that they were going to thank them for one thing each, they didn't talk about what they were going to thank them for, but as they all came forward every single child thanked them for the daily family worship that they had led them in.*

*“The most important thing I do in my life is daily, sustained family worship, if I fail there, I feel like I fail everywhere.” – Joel Beeke*