

²⁰ They went^[d] into a house. A crowd gathered again so that they were not even able to eat a meal. ²¹ When his own people^[e] heard this, they went out to take control of him, because they were saying, “He is out of his mind.”

²² The experts in the law who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “He drives out demons by the ruler of demons.”

²³ Jesus called them together and spoke to them in parables. “How can Satan drive out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. ²⁶ And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand but is finished. ²⁷ On the other hand, no one can enter a strong man’s house to steal his possessions unless he ties up the strong man first. Then he can plunder his house. ²⁸ Amen^[f] I tell you: Everything will be forgiven people, their sins and whatever blasphemies they may speak. ²⁹ But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.”^[g] ³⁰ Jesus said this because they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”

³¹ Then his mother and his brothers arrived. While they were standing outside, they sent word to Jesus, calling for him. ³² A crowd was sitting around him. They began to tell him, “Look, your mother and your brothers are outside looking for you.”

³³ He replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” ³⁴ He looked at those who sat around him in a circle and he said, “Look, my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ For whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

Welcome to the Family

The family today is a mess. A father has four wives just like grandpa, a single mother carries her father’s child, or even more common, two get together for a one night stand only to find out she’s pregnant. Sound familiar? In reality this is nothing new. The family has been falling apart ever since the fall into sin. I’m not talking about today. I’m talking about the families of Jacob, Tamar, David and Bathsheba.

Not long ago, the typical American family consisted of a father, mother, and three or four children. Not long ago thirteen children were born on a kitchen table. Workers were needed but times have changed and so has the family. Across America the average age for marriage is higher. People are putting off marriage and having fewer children. Single family dwellings have increased. Families are blended, non-traditional, and this is the new normal.

Some complain that the family is changing because the family has been haven of hope for the heartless world. Others welcome the change because family has been a heartless world. Many of you may not even have a family. The family is changing. The family is being redefined; new boundaries are set, even the U.S. Census Bureau struggles with this one.

Today we look to Jesus for a word of wisdom as his family says, “He’s out of his mind,” and tries to control him. Jesus is insulted and he in turn disowns and redefines the family. Welcome to the family.

As we come home to the Word of God, we find that Mark has made us a literary sandwich. The bun is family and the scribes, and then comes the meat, the teaching portion at the center, followed by more bread with scribes and family. Jesus is portrayed as a Wildman. Jesus is the son who grew his hair out, got a tattoo (In Revelation we see his tattoo: King of king and Lord of lords), speaks with demons, and casts them out. Jesus breaks the rules and confronts the Pharisees. Jesus looks like a rebellious son. As he comes home his family has something to say about it. They want to take control of him - manhandle, seize, or arrest him. They aren’t concerned for his health. They think he’s gone out of his mind. They thought he was wrong. They send someone in to claim him. Jesus does the unthinkable. He won’t leave the house to meet his mother Mary in the streets. He the nerve to question, “*Who is my family?*” To us that is rude but for them this was scandalous.

Their entire culture was built around the family. But you notice who wasn’t there? There is no mention of a father. Joseph is missing. Mary may be a single mother. Joseph may be either dead or divorced. In the family of that time if there is no father then the duty as head of household falls to the oldest son. The oldest son however happens to be a self-proclaimed prophet who is gallivanting around Galilee with twelve men doing his “Father’s business,” upsetting the religious elite, and catching the attention of the Romans. They’re not just concerned for Jesus; they are worried about their family name.

Mary and her family join together with the scribes and proclaim, “*He’s out of his mind. He’s possessed by a demon.*” They blaspheme his name. There is a serious showdown in the streets as Jesus redefines the family. How could he do such a thing?

In much the same way that we often try to redefine who Jesus because we are worried about our name or our family. The family isn’t always a haven for a heartless world. In many ways we struggle and fight with family. Our bodies, as Paul says, “*Are wasting away*” and we don’t enjoy the process. We think a brother or sister should step up and take care of mom or dad - but they don’t. And if you really want to see family fight just have an inheritance that needs to be divided. Often the family is far from being a haven from the heartless world the family is frequently that heartless world as they are insulted, disowned, and redefined. They’re not welcome anymore.

The same can happen in the church when someone steps on boundaries based on our cultural conditioning and a fight begins. Christianity isn’t about long or short hair, tattoos, being red, blue, native, or undocumented. Christianity isn’t Pro-this or Anti-that. It’s not even about traditional or

contemporary. Christianity is and always has been about our Father's Will. But that's the one thing we aren't as often interested in. (Rather have it my way.)

Many place family before God. If Jesus begins to draw lines between blood born relatives... if Jesus begins to interfere with how you interact with this world; the straight jacket comes out as we join our voices with Mary and his brothers, "He's out of his mind." Jesus and his disciples didn't mean that... that was cultural, but you'd think if this were God's Word they would have taken the cultural baggage out? Then when you read what Jesus taught and what Paul wrote you'd understand that what they said was rather insulting to the culture of their time. We want to love family and our God but not at the expense of family.

The Pharisees, even Jesus' family wanted to have Jesus but they wanted to control Jesus which placed them and us outside of the family Jesus defines, "*Whoever does the will of my Father,*" that's family. Jesus isn't excluding or limiting those who are in and those who are out. Jesus is rather inclusive.

Jesus looks around the room and he sees a blended family, of prostitutes, tax collectors, and sinners. He takes those from broken homes and dysfunctional families and pays them the highest possible compliment anyone could ever give as he says, "You're family." He forgives them and claims them as his own. That's good news for those inside the house but not so good for those outside. Those claiming, "*He's out of his mind!*" or Those saying, "*He's possessed by Beelzebul!*" (meaning Beelzebul: Lord of flies or Lord of house? Lord of house fits with the context.)

We arrive at the meat portion of the sandwich where Jesus proclaims what he has come to do. "*How can Satan drive out Satan*" If Jesus really was in league with the devil, why would he drive out demons? What good would that serve? "*If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.*²⁵ *If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.*²⁶ *And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come.*²⁷ *In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man's house.*

Jesus turns the table on them and says, "You say I'm in league with the devil but you're the one standing with him. You've taken his side. I'm driving out demons, forgiving sin, and healing. The devil's end has come. He's met his match." Jesus walks into the strong man's house, binds him, and plunders his possessions. Jesus came into this world to crush the serpent. With the temptation of Jesus, that 40 days in the desert, the devil has been bound. The binding of the Serpent, the dragon, the devil in Revelation 20 for a 1,000 years is this. Jesus is driving out demons. The devil's reign has run out. The binding of Satan began at Jesus ministry and is finished on the cross with the word, "Forgiven."

He's not content with his blood born relatives. The ESV says it better, "*All sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter.*" Even those who mock and nail him to the cross aren't cut off. Jesus cares for his family as he hung on the cross he calls out, "*Here is your mother... Here is your son.*" Jesus expands family beyond blood, spouses, or even disciples and includes those who do his Father's will. What is the Father's will? To believe in the one he has sent. "*For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.*" (John 6:40) But those who don't believe blaspheme the Holy Spirit. They are saying, "He has an unclean spirit." That sin is unbelief.

Jesus still looks around us today and gives us the highest compliment, "You're family." Jesus takes a truism "blood is thicker than water" and he turns it upside down, "*Water is thicker than blood.*" Through water and his Word (baptism) he brings us into his family. He compliments you and then claims you as his own. That's good news for those who find themselves redefined outside of family.

That means that no matter where you are or where you've come from, you have a family. Life together won't always be easy: there will be the holidays where we get together and fight. There will be disagreements, someone will end up with a broken nose but that's not the end of family. That's not even the end of friendship. We have a family that is always there no matter what happens, a family you can always run to, and a family where you are always welcome. That's the family Jesus defines for us.

His family isn't big enough. So he sends us out to steal from the strong man, to storm the gates of hell. The Christian church is never in the defensive position. Your enemy is tied up on the floor. You don't wage war on the people, call them names, or hide from them. You check doors and handles to see which ones are open. (We're not petty thieves looking for change - we're looking for people, for family.) When you tell them what God has done, do the will of your Father, that won't always work out for you. Family may disown you. Friends may look at you funny but Mark reminds us later when Peter says, "*Lord, we have left everything to follow you.*" And Jesus replies, "*Truly I say to you, no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel³⁰ will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life.* You have a family.

It may be a mess. It may be changing and redefined. Family may be considered as two or more people living together related by birth, marriage, or adoption. You have a family a hundred times that size. So if the devil divides you from those blood born relatives with insults and disowning, go back to the highest compliment you have. Jesus stands there with arms open, "Welcome to the family." He compliments you, claims you, and defines you not by your past but by his perfect life for you. Amen.

