



Matthew 12:46–50

46 While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. 47 Someone told him, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.” 48 He replied to him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” 49 Pointing to his disciples, he 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.”

Reflection

(Today’s talk is given by Craig Tubman)

In today’s passage we have a moment of pause from Jesus conflict with the Pharisees and teachers of the law to be given a brief insight into an invitation Jesus gives those who follow him.

It’s all initiated by Jesus’ family coming to see him. In Mark’s account of this event, he records Jesus’ family seeking him out with a sense of embarrassment thinking that Jesus is out of his mind, but Matthew does not give us this particular context,

rather he just notes that Jesus' mother and brothers arrive.

On the surface it appears as though Jesus is unloving to his mother and brothers. They've come to see him and he seems to just ignore them. However we know that from other records, especially during his crucifixion, Jesus shows great care and love towards his mother. And James, one of his brothers, goes on to be an early leader in the church and writes in one of the letters recorded for us in the New Testament urging people to let their faith in Jesus shape their lives in real and tangible ways.

So this is not a simple account of Jesus being rude to his family. It is rather an opportunity that Jesus is using to give deeper

insight into his mission as the Son of God.

Families are beautifully complex communities, aren't they? You can pretty safely argue that families are the building blocks of human existence. A man and woman coming together, bringing forth new life and raising that child to adulthood. That's pretty essential to our survival. And humans are so deeply relational that we really need immediate community as soon as we are born. We need love and nurture and good parenting. Most animals tend to be far more self-sufficient at a younger age. Most can walk and run often within minutes of being born, but not humans. It's almost as if that relational core is stitched into our very DNA.

Yet our experience of family may not al-

ways be such a good one. For families are just as susceptible to the brokenness of a sinful world and sinful hearts as anything else in creation. Whilst family is at its best the building block for a healthy humanity, at its worst it is a hellish experience, where commitments are broken, children are abandoned and emotional scars can be left that last a lifetime.

Whether you've experienced good family or not, God's invitation to all humanity is to join something greater. You can put a good case forward that the whole bible story can be summed up in the account of God working within time and space to bring us, his creatures, back into relationship with him through his Son Jesus.

In this context, human families are really

just a daily experience of a much bigger reality. We are to a degree all God's children. Creatures of a creator God. Yet whilst we may all be God's children, we are not all in God's family. This is a strange reality but one that Jesus makes abundantly clear in today's passage.

As his family come to see him, Jesus uses the opportunity to teach us something about God's intention for us.

49 "Pointing to his disciples, he 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."

The invitation that Jesus extends to us to enter the kingdom of Heaven is also an

invitation into God's family. A global family that is being shaped more like God our Father and one that has an eternal inheritance. But this is only open through Jesus, through being a disciple or follower of Jesus. It's our connection with the Son of God that leads us into the family.

The writer of Hebrews puts it this way in chapter 2 of his letter,

11 Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. 12 He says, 'I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises.'

Did you note those words from Jesus? Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. Whilst we are all children of God in that we have received life from him, our sin has separated us from relationship with a holy and perfect God. But in Jesus we are made holy, set apart for adoption into God's eternal family.

The writer of Hebrews continues,

“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”

Just like a good earthly family leads youngsters to flourish, God's family is all about leading each one of us, regardless of our past towards a flourishing made possible through a love for God and a love for others. This new growth will be explored a little further by Jesus as he shares with us the parable of the sower.

But for now the invitation is to follow Jesus and find the family of God. For those of us with very close-knit families there is a warning here from Jesus to not elevate our families to a level of worship. Good families are a blessing from God but we must be wary if 'family' distances us from God and his people. The greatest family is God's and we are adopted into this family through Jesus. No earthly family can pro-

vide the security and assurance that God himself can and we'd do good to allow our worship of God alone to lead us to love our family in a way that leads them to the goodness of God.

For those of us with dysfunctional families there is an encouragement here that through Jesus you can be part of a far bigger and better family than you have ever known. Not forged by your own good merit but through the grace of God, taking your sin on himself and asking you to join his eternal family.

Think

Take some time today to reflect upon how you see yourself as a follower of Jesus. How are you letting yourself be shaped

by your heavenly Father? Consider those friends of yours who share Christian faith, do you see them as eternal brothers and sisters? What may change in your relating to them through this new framework?

Pray

Why not spend some time in prayer thanking God for what he has done for you through his Son and what it means to be locked in, adopted and secure in God's eternal family.