

Mark 3:19b-22; 31-35
Family on Mission
Sunday May 14th, 2017 Mother's Day

The story is told of two children who told their mom to stay in bed one Mother's Day morning. As she lay there looking forward to breakfast in bed, the smell of frying bacon floated in from the kitchen.

Well she lay there and waited and waited and waited and no one appeared with breakfast, so she finally got up, went to the kitchen and found both of them sitting at the table eating bacon and eggs grinning ear to ear.

At that point one young daughter brightly beamed and said, "This is your surprise for Mother's Day...we cooked our own breakfast!" Mikey's Funnies

Food is very much a part of Mother's Day and can be a vital part of our Family on Mission for God.

Once in a class I taught, we talked about our childhood dinners around the kitchen table.



We spoke about how to this day we could walk into our old family home and when asked to take a seat we would sit down in the same places we sat in 30, 40, 60 years ago. Many shared deeply about how those family meals meant so much to them, the prayers, the conversation, the interaction of the generations.

It is around the kitchen table that we can often receive the gift of faith and the presence of our Lord and Savior. As I said last week, Jesus is often revealed in the breaking of the bread!



I was once asked to participate in a Roman Catholic/United Methodist wedding. Since the couple was from different faith backgrounds, and the woman would not convert to Catholicism, I had to do the vows and the Priest did the rest of the ceremony including the sermon.

I always remember what he said, because it was so full of truth and wisdom. He said that when two Christians come together in marriage they form a new church for Jesus promised *'wherever two or three are gathered together in my name there I am in the midst of them.'*

He then said as time goes by and children are born they become members of that new church of which the spiritual directors and teachers are the parents. To me it was a beautiful understanding of the family as the smallest most intimate church that God has called into being.



This intimate church, a family, often gathers for worship (the prayer of thanks before the meal) and fellowship around the kitchen table. These fellowship times give parents an immense opportunity to reveal Christ to their children in the breaking of the bread.

I kid you a lot that the Methodist's unofficial motto is, **"We meet to eat and we eat to meet."** But I can't emphasize enough today the importance of physically, emotionally and spiritually for families and church families eating together.

I once Googled "Importance of families eating together" and in .43 seconds found 6,700,000 articles and studies on why it is good families eat together. Finding the time to eat together is a great concern for many families and study after study has shown the great benefit.



These studies spoke about how families who eat together eat healthier meals, and the kids are less likely to become overweight. They spoke about how kids who ate with their parents and shared around the table were less likely to abuse alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs and did better at school and had better family relationships.

A lot of our adult wisdom can be shared around the table and if that wisdom leads to better life and living for our children, it is deeply spiritual advice. Just look at the Proverbs for examples of this. WebMD

And in this overly busy society in which we live, I know it is hard to coordinate eating schedules and times, but the effort is worth it!!

Meals are important times and they are times in which our children can see God through us and through our teaching have their lives shaped into the image of God.



They are times in which our children can, in a very tangible way, experience God's love for them through the relationships around the table. The picture on the screen is from the show "Duck Dynasty". It shows the Biblical concept of a Family on Mission composed of members by blood, adoption and friendship. More in a moment.

And I know it's not easy for many families today to carve out such regular times of fellowship. In many families both parents work. There are many single parent families. The kids, as they grow up, develop many sports and interests, but one way to really help our children is to simply schedule dinners. Turn off all electronic devices including YOUR cell phone and eat and fellowship with them. Don't be like this.



Eating with them is such a great gift to them, and to you, in so many ways, don't lose the time.

Now you know the mission statement of the UMC is **"To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."** I want to put that mission statement into different terms to help us understand the Church as a family for this Mother's day.

First, let us examine the metaphor of the Church as God's Family. God of course is the Father. Jesus is our brother and so the mission of the Church, the Family of God, is **to invite and adopt others into the Family!**

Jesus bears a direct family resemblance to God. He came to earth to reveal the nature and will of God. We as we become part of the family take on that family resemblance. As we follow Jesus, which is what a disciple of Jesus does, we and our lives begin to look more like Jesus. No, of course, this is not to physically look like Jesus for there are so many versions to choose from:



But we are called to shape our lives after how Jesus treated and loved others and loved God the Father.

Our job as biological parents and grandparents of our children and grandchildren is to be, most fundamentally, their spiritual parents and grandparents **like Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice** were to him. Our job is to help our children take on the family resemblance like Jesus did of his Father and the disciple did of Jesus.

It is one long line of family resemblance that we do not receive biologically, but spiritually, by being adopted into the family of God.

I hate to break this to some of you at this late date in life, but yes you were adopted!! Adopted into the family of God as Ephesians 1:5 says, **“He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will,”**

Now for those who don't have the best biological family relationships Jesus knows what that is like. Jesus knows what it is like to have a great big family falling out where you get rejected and have to start all over making a new family.

You see, when Jesus returned to Nazareth after he began his ministry, he was greeted with great pride, admiration and expectation as the wonder boy who came home to preach. In the synagogue he would have been sitting with his whole family, his “Oikos” (Greek for Family) and when invited he got up to read from Isaiah and speak.

Of course he read the prophecy of his ministry beginning, which I am sure produced a lot of oohs, and aahs, but then he went on to speak of God's judgement of them and that wasn't met so well.

In fact he got the crowd in the synagogue so upset they all got up and drug him to the cliff next to the village to throw him off and he simply walked through the crowd and disappeared.



The surprising thing as you read this is that nobody in his family jumped up to defend him, not his mother, or his brothers or sisters. No one from his family stood to defend him, which is particularly surprising in that day and age where your entire life and livelihood rotated around your family. Every family to survive and thrive had a family trade and the family defended each other.

So, Jesus went off to form a new family, a family of God with his new friends, soon to be disciples, in the town of Capernaum: Peter and Andrew. Earlier you know Jesus had met these two men who were **People of Peace to Jesus**. They welcomed him, they listened to him, they liked him, and they served him by taking him into their home.

Jesus bio family failed him for the meantime; so he went and made his own new family. He gathered a group of people and began working with them to help them take on the family resemblance of the Family of God!

So, if you don't have bio-kids or grandkids to work on here in the vicinity of Vista, or if you are single or widowed, do what Jesus did; make up a new family. Make a new branch of the Family of God.

Well, how do you do that? Let's go back to our scripture story. Jesus bio family heard what he was up too and thought he had gone insane so they went to collect him. It says, **"When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, 'He has gone out of his mind.'"**

Jesus then said something very shocking in that day and age because of the family disrespect it showed. When told his **"Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you."**

He said, looking at those who sat around him **"Who are my mother and my brothers?" "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."**

In other words whoever does the will of God becomes part of the Family of God. Whoever does what God wants done takes on the family resemblance, and the image of God shows through.

Whenever you are gathered with a group of believers who are trying to live like Jesus, make their lives like Jesus, and invite others to join them then you are a part of the Family of God. **You are a Family on Mission.**

In modern Church language these are also called missional communities. They are communities of people that are using their God given talents to do what God has gifted them to do.

If Jesus was a singer and sang in a choir he would sing in our choir and as this choir sings, loves each other as God does and invites others into that family of singers they are a branch of the Family of God. They are a family on mission.

As our prayer shawl ministry knits shawls and other items and prayers over them and loves each other they are a family on mission.

When we as a church gather for Dinners for 6, hotdog roasts, UMW dinners, potlucks and more, and in those gatherings seek to encourage and love each other as God would do they are branches of the Family of God.

Whenever you are gathered with a group of believers who are trying to live like Jesus, make their lives like Jesus, and invite others to join in, then you are a part, a branch in the Family of God.

This is why those two questions that I ask are so vitally important!! **What is God saying to you and what are you going to do?** They propel us into mission and the Family of God.

Jesus said, **“Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”**

We need to **learn to listen to God to know what God’s will is.** Then **we need to do what God tells us to,** which is often the harder part. That is how we become a part, remain a part and grow as part of the Family of God.

Over a year ago I preached about this and invited people to join me in a **“Huddle Group”** to find out how to more closely listen to God and do what He asks. 12 people joined me in this adventure. People have listened and God has sent them in all sorts of directions. Some are starting new huddles on their own, some will simply repeat the course

and act as helpers, and some God has called to different ministries outside huddle groups, but I make the invitation again.

One Huddle started this past Wednesday in Saddlebrook. I will start a new one in early June on Thursdays at 1:30. One is kicking off in Sun City the week after next, and one in Fairwinds in August when Sharon Kaste literally gets back on her feet after foot surgery.

In the end this is a way to nurture yourself and others in the faith, which I think is a great way to honor and remember the importance of our mothers who nurtured us in our lives and faith be they our biological mothers or one's who magnificently adopted us into their lives and faith.

If you feel called write your name down, give it to me and we will talk. And if called be open to the invitation.

So again on behalf of God I ask you, what is God saying to you and what are you going to do?

In Jesus Name, amen.