

Mark 3:19b-27, 31-35

The Family of God

June 10th, 2018

This scripture reminded me of a Deli experience Deede and I had while on vacation in New York City several years ago. We went to a deli near Ground Zero during the lunch hour. We could hardly get in the place and the first two seats came open, we sat in them. It was standing room only in there and absolute chaos.

The owner/manager was shouting at everyone, workers and customers alike. It seemed about half the staff couldn't speak English and there was a group of 100 adults who picked that deli that day to make their lunches. And they were on top of the regulars from the new Freedom Tower that was going up. I thought we were never going to eat.

Our story begins with *"Then Jesus went home and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat."* At least Deede and I got to eat. But the scene described here in our scripture was chaotic and hostile. People with diseases and demon possessed would push up against Jesus to touch him and be healed.

The scribes from Jerusalem showed up and charged Jesus with two things: being demon possessed and casting out demons by the power of the ruler of demons. Jesus' family also showed up convinced he had lost his mind and were determined to haul him off.

We have here 2 separate but related story lines, 2 stories of opposition and misunderstanding. Jesus addressed the scribes first, because their charges of demon possession and using the power of Beelzebul the ruler of demons to cast out demons were charges that could result in his banishment or death.

It is hard for us to understand this, but the phrase used in modern politics of the "demonization of your opponent" applies here and maybe even came from here. It was easy to demonize and then destroy someone through accusations of demon possession in Jesus' day,

especially if you were someone in religious authority like the scribes were.

One Bible scholar put it this way, *“Ancient societies often used charges of magic to rein in persons whose extraordinary position, gifts, or behavior challenged the established order.”* The New Interpreter’s Bible on Matthew and Mark page 567

It was easier to demonize and thus destroy Jesus than to listen to him and follow him.

So, in verses 22-27 Jesus answers the Scribes charges using 4 traditional pieces of wisdom, or as some call them proverbs. But it says he answered them in “parables.” It says, *“And he called them to him, and said to them in parables,...”*

The use of the word “parables’ confuses us in that what follows could actually be called “proverbs” or as one Biblical scholar put it most helpfully, “analogies”. Jesus answered the scribes with analogies. I’ll translate these parables now

“So Jesus says: 1st, *‘Just think! If there is internal dissension in a kingdom, that kingdom cannot last.*

2nd, *If there are quarrels in a house, that house will not endure long.*

3rd, *If Satan is actually making war against his own demons then he is finished as an effective power, because civil war has begun in the kingdom of Satan.’*

Finally, Jesus says essentially a strong man (Satan) can only be tied up and robbed if a stronger man arrives, and I am that man. Mark by Barclay pages 89,

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Point blank Jesus was saying he was neither demon possessed or worked for Satan in terms and terminology they could all understand.

So then we go back to the story of Jesus’ family in verse 31 and 32.

“And his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside they sent to him and called him.

And a crowd was sitting about him; and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.”

Jesus takes this as a teaching moment about the Kingdom in verses 33-35. *“And he replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking around on those who sat about him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother.”*

Essentially, whoever does the will of God is Jesus’ brother, sister or mother. When we do the will of God we are part of the Family of God. God’s will is that we believe. Obedience through belief is the beginning of our adoption into the Family of God.

Romans 8:14-16 says this, *“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ...”*

When we believe and do the will of God, we are part of God’s family. We are Jesus’ brother, sister, or mother.

Now we have to note, at this point, there seems there was a lot of disbelief in Jesus’ family. Even Mary had doubts, doubts that would be overcome, but at the moment she gathered with Jesus’ brothers and sisters to take Jesus home as one who had lost his mind.

But Jesus was true to his call and teaching here in that entrance into his family had more to do with obedience than it had to do with blood.

Elsewhere in Luke 11:27-28 it says, Jesus, invitation into relationship with him came with the challenge that obedience to God held a higher place than “family of origin”. In fact our true eternal spiritual family comes through obedience to God’s Will.

Now what is the “Will of God?” The simplest answer comes from Luke 10:37, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.”

We see this lived out at Vista Church in so many ways from the personal relationships of caring within our congregation, to local ministries, to international ministries and missions. I usually preach on these verses to inspire people to step forward into ministries and missions of love and service, but instead today I want to lift up what we are already doing. Every once in a while we need to hear from God an “Atta boy, or Atta Girl!” or in more formal Biblical language “Well done good and faithful servants.”

As one member emailed me and said, “Our beloved Vista church seems to have a lot of folks who are suffering lately. While this can be depressing, it is also a time for the rest of us with the good fortune to be healthy to feel grateful that we are available to help where needed, even in the smallest of ways. After all, it’s what we do best and I’m proud to be a member of this wonderful church....”

I want to start by saying thank you for the enormous outpouring of love and support for Debbi Maloid and Cork Lozier! The hospital where Debbi was has been amazed by the many visits and calls. Dick could say the same for Cork. And the circle of the Family of God of those doing the will of God stretches far outside the bounds of the members and friends of Vista Church. Distant family and friends of Debbi kept in touch and prayer. Debbi has surrounded herself in life with believing caring friends.

Cork and Dick's home was filled with family and friends from this and their other church expressing their love and concern. These two people are but two of many whom I have seen so lovingly taken care of in their time of need. Without a doubt in my mind those showing the care are doing the will of God and are part of the Family of God.

These past two weeks our Jr. High and Sr. High schoolers have been on mission trips doing the will of God. Valerie Hammons has been with them, and yes folks, she needs a vacation to spend time with her new grandchild. I have asked Valerie and some of the youth to tell us of their service experiences as they have done the will of God and participated as members of the family of God.

All of this is provided by your love, your example and your financial support. These youth have been engaged in on-the-job-training to learn what the Family business of God is: the loving and caring for others.

This is also Agua Prieta Sponsor recognition Sunday so Jan Hopke-Almer will tell a bit about how your financial support has done the work and will of God as we have participated together as the Family of God.

I will begin with the youth. But first, I want to point out I picked the picture for the cover of the bulletin, not because it showed a family, but it showed young and old alike serving others in love. It showed the Family of God.

Valerie and ?????







Jan Hopke-Almer ?????

Let's celebrate these missions and ministries of love and caring as the family of God.