

The Greatest Family

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 January 2022

Preacher: Matthew Capone

[0 : 0 0] My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's Word to you today. Special welcome if you are new or you're visiting with us.

We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community. And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good.

They don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in His Word.

We're continuing our series in the Gospel of Mark. Today we're ending Mark chapter 3, and next week we'll begin Mark chapter 4. You'll remember that the Gospels tell the story of Jesus in His life and His death and His resurrection.

And as we come to Mark, there are two questions particular to this Gospel, which are first, who is Jesus? And two, how do we respond to Him? This morning as we look at the end of chapter 3, we're going to continue to see what Jesus' call to follow Him actually means.

[1 : 1 3] We're going to see how far that call actually goes. You'll remember from chapter 1, Jesus walking along, picking His disciples, He calls them to Himself, and He says, for example, in chapter 1, verse 20, follow Me.

Well, in 1.20 it says He called them. And earlier in this chapter, He goes up on a mountain to pick His disciples, and it tells us that He called them.

And so we're continuing to look at this call to see how radical it is and how deep it is. We're going to see two things in this passage.

First of all, the priority of the kingdom, and second, the mark of the kingdom. First, the priority of the kingdom, and second, the mark of the kingdom.

And so with that, we're going to read now. I invite you to turn with me. You can turn in your worship guide. You can turn in your Bible. You can turn on your phone. No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's Word.

[2 : 1 3] And God tells us that His Word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold. And it's sweeter than honey, even the honey that comes straight from the honeycomb, which is why we read now, starting at verse 31.

And His mother and His brothers came, and standing outside, they sent to Him and called Him. And a crowd was sitting around Him, and they said to Him, Your mother and your brothers are outside seeking You.

And He answered them, Who are my mother and my brothers? And looking about at those who sat around Him, He said, Here are my mother and my brothers.

For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's Word.

Our Father in Heaven, we simply thank You that You have given us Your Word and that You speak to us now. But we also confess that it is hard for us.

[3 : 1 5] We come as people who are distracted, people are hurting, people who are burdened, people who are confused. And so we ask that You would clear those things up for us by Your Spirit this morning, that You would focus us, that You'd comfort us, that You'd clarify for us.

Most of all, You'd show us Jesus Christ, that we would see Him as beautiful and glorious, that You would use Your Word to encourage us and to challenge us as we follow Him.

And we thank You that we can have determined His confidence as we ask these things because we ask them in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. So I don't know how many of you have been

involved in some sort of family intervention.

You know what I'm talking about. You finally meet with a member of your family and you confront them, whether it's confronting them about their addiction or their behavior, or maybe it's about an unhealthy relationship.

Now, I've never participated in a family intervention, but as a pastor, I've certainly heard about them. And in this passage before us this morning, we get to witness a family intervention from Jesus and His immediate family.

[4 : 40] Jesus here has become the crazy family member who finally needs to be brought back from the brink. Now, his family maybe has known there's always been something a little bit off about Jesus.

It was sort of cute when He stayed in Jerusalem as a child and Mary and Joseph couldn't find Him because He was hanging out with the teachers. The unfortunate fact is that there are some things that are only cute when you're little.

And Jesus has come to an age. Jesus is not little anymore, and what He's doing is not cute anymore. Maybe His family should have intervened sooner, but as they say, better late than never. It has finally come time for them to do something. Jesus, you've had a good run, and it's time for you to finally pack it up and come home.

And so that's what we see here in verse 31. His mother and his brothers came, and standing outside, they sent to Him and called Him. Jesus has gone too far, and it's time to finally bring it to an end.

[5 : 48] We're picking up a story that we began earlier in verses 20 and 21. You may remember all the way back before Advent in November when we finished or paused in the Gospel of Mark.

Jesus' family at that point goes out to look for Him. So if you have your Bible with you, you can see this in verses 20 and 21. Especially 21, it says, And when His family heard it, they went out to seize Him, for they were saying, He is out of His mind.

Now, after His family says this, look, Jesus is crazy. He's gone too far. We immediately switch scenes, and we go to what we talked about last week when the scribes come and oppose Jesus, and they credit His power to demons.

Now, this is something we can't overlook because when we read the Bible, really when you read any good literature, if a story is broken up like that, it means something.

Especially in the Gospels, if we have an interruption where we start a story, we go to another story, and we come back, the author is doing that with a clear intention. It's called a bookend, and it's meant to highlight some sort of connection between these two stories.

[6 : 54] Either there's a contrast to be made, one character is to be emulated, other is not, or there's a similarity that's being drawn between the two. And so what is the connection here between the scribes, on the one hand, who are hostile to Jesus, and His family, on the other hand, who are the ones who are closest to Him, perhaps the ones who love Jesus more than anything else?

Well, the connection is this. Both Jesus' family and the scribes miss what is actually going on. Both Jesus' family and the scribes miss what is actually going on.

Both, at some level, are opposing Jesus and His mission. Now, one is out of active hostility, right?

The scribes do not like Jesus, and we're gonna ultimately see they're part of the plot to kill Him.

So one is hostility. His family here, of course, we can assume the best, perhaps out of misunderstanding or ignorance. Regardless of the motive, both misunderstand Jesus' mission, both oppose it.

And so as we, at Chine Mountain, look to follow Jesus together, the point for us is this. It is not just those on the outside who thwart following God's mission.

[8 : 19] It is not just those on the outside who misunderstand what God's kingdom is about and what He is calling us to.

It is sometimes those on the inside as well. In fact, sometimes it is not just those on the inside. It is those who are the very closest to us.

It is those with the very best intentions who misunderstand Jesus' call. Of course, misunderstanding is better than all-out hostility.

What His family does here is better than accusing Jesus of being in league with the devil. And it is still misunderstanding, missing, not realizing what it is that Jesus is here for.

And so it's within this conflict that Jesus clarifies His priorities. Verse 32. So 31, His mother and His brothers come.

[9 : 23] They're calling Him. Verse 32, there's a crowd who's sitting around Him. And they said to Him, Your mother and your brothers are outside seeking you. Now the expectation of His family is that His response is obvious.

Of course, Jesus is going to stop teaching and He's going to go out and talk to His family because what could be more important? We're in a culture, as we read here, where family is more important than anything else.

It is a core commitment, a core value. And so Jesus, being a good Jewish boy, is going to respect His mother and honor His brothers by leaving, stopping to teach, and dealing with whatever the emergency is in that moment.

And so that's what makes Jesus' response here so surprising. Verse 33, He asks them this rhetorical question, Who are my mother and my brothers? And then He tells them, Here are my mother and my brothers.

In other words, you all are actually my family. For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother. Jesus, in a culture that puts family as one of, if not the top priority here, is doing something radical, something shocking, something disruptive.

[10 : 42] He is upsetting and violating what the Jews would have loved and valued at great cost, perhaps more than anything else.

Now, this is hard for us as Western people to understand because family is not our number one value. And so when we hear Jesus saying, Okay, my family is going to have to wait.

I have a higher priority. That doesn't strike us as offensive and as upsetting as it would have the original audience. That makes a little bit more sense to us. We don't live in a culture that says family oriented.

And so I want for us to feel how disruptive this is as Americans. It would probably be something like this. For us, our core value is not loyalty to family.

One of our greatest core values is freedom and choice. We love freedom and choice. That's our loyalty, perhaps above almost anything else.

[11 : 40] So I want you to imagine this. Someone says to you, The only way that you can get married is to have an arranged marriage.

Yeah. The only way you can get married is to have an arranged marriage. Western people, we'd say what?

Better to not get married than to risk limiting my options. If that's what we're talking about, if that's my only option, I am definitely remaining single forever.

Right? If giving up family is my only option, I'm definitely not following Jesus. That is a step too far. Okay? Sacrificing family would have been a nightmare for them in the way that having limited options, having our decisions made for us, is a nightmare for us.

[12 : 42] The American nightmare. And so that's how we come to our first point from this passage, the priority of the kingdom. Jesus is making a point here for us that there is a hierarchy, a priority of loyalties in this life.

Our ultimate priority, our ultimate loyalty is with him. The kingdom of God, for these people, comes before family. We could say the kingdom of God comes before anyone and anything else.

In fact, to bring this point home for us, Mark actually draws us a picture in this passage. The Bible is God's word in which he instructs us and guides us. It is also a phenomenal piece of literature.

And so watch what's happening here. There are literally two circles in this story. There's an inner circle and an outer circle. Verse 31, his mother and his brothers came and standing outside.

Okay? They're on the outer circle. Verse 32, a crowd was sitting around him. There's an inner circle. In this story, Mark is literally illustrating for us by geography, Jesus' order of priorities.

[14 : 03] Yes, family matters. It does not matter as much as his mission for the kingdom of God as he sits, teaching and discipling those who are or will become his disciples who are eager to sit at his feet and learn what he has to say.

They are quite literally the inner circle. They are literally his first priority. There's another literary device here going on with some word play.

So we have the visual illustration of Jesus' priorities. We also have a demonstration of the conflict that's going on. There's an important word that we've seen throughout the gospel in Mark, and it's

the word call or called or calling.

Mark chapter 1, verse 20, Jesus finds James and John. It tells us, and immediately he called them. Earlier in this chapter, we saw Jesus pick the 12 who follow him.

Verse 13, he went up on the mountain and called to him those he desired, and they came to him. Did you notice what Jesus' family does in this passage?

[15:20] Verse 31, standing outside, they sent to him and called him. The point is this.

Jesus calls people to follow him, and there are always other voices calling. Jesus calls people to follow him, and there are always many other voices calling us to follow.

There is always competition for our attention. There is always competition for our loves and our loyalty. And so part of the reason that we are gathered here together this morning as the family of God at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church is so that we could be reminded this morning as we are every Sunday of the ultimate call of Jesus that he gives to us and on our lives.

When we come and we hear the call to worship, that is our reminder again that Jesus' calling matters more than any other. It is the reminder that we belong to him as family that have been adopted, and so we come and worship him, directing our worship towards him and with other people around us who are our brothers and sisters.

There is only one ultimate call, and there are many other voices looking to pull us and direct us.

[16:54] Jesus is the one who is ultimately calling. His mother and his brothers remind us there are other calls as well.

Calls that are tuned out when and if they conflict with Jesus' call. It is his call that is most important. Jesus, in other words, upends and directs the budget of our lives. It is almost a cliché to say that how you budget your life, how you budget your money, reveals what you believe is essential and what you believe is discretionary.

In fact, some people would say if you show me your budget, I will show you what is important to you. It reveals what you consider to be wants and what you consider to be needs.

So I want you to imagine for a second someone saying this. I've spent so much on new clothes this month, it's actually not going to work for me to pay my mortgage.

[18:10] That's going to have to wait until next month. No. Everyone knows you don't budget like that. You do not spend and then see if you have money left over to pay your mortgage.

No, you pay your mortgage and you see what's left over for other things. You pay what's essential. You pay for your needs and then you see what's left over for your wants. Your savings determine your spending, not the other way around.

Your essentials determine how much is left over for your discretionary spending, not the other way around. You don't pay for house cleaning if you can't afford your mortgage.

You don't pay for your car to be repainted if you can't buy gas. You don't send money to other families if you can't feed your own. The same applies to the budget of our lives.

Our essential spending, what is a need and not a want is our commitment to God and his kingdom which directs and determines everything else.

[19:17] That is the essential from which everything else is downstream. and so we do this. We prioritize being with God's people in worship and we see what time is left over for other things.

We don't ask whether we can afford to obey God's commands. We obey God's commands and we trust him to provide. We set aside money for God and for the poor and we see what is left over for us.

We see if someone shares our faith commitment first and then we determine whether they're a candidate for dating or for marriage.

We honor our commitments as parents and spouses first and then we see what's left over for extracurriculars. And in this passage particularly we know God's will first and then we evaluate the expectations of our families.

We have clarity about our priorities and our hierarchies about what's essential and what's discretionary in other parts of life. But somehow when it comes to our spiritual life things quickly get muddled.

[20:37] Jesus here cuts through all of that and provides us with tremendous clarity. We are tempted to think that Christianity is a hobby that we pick up and put down when we want.

Jesus says follow me. Jesus says everything else can be a hobby but not me.

I am not the priority that's juggled along with many others. I am the priority that determines what else can fit and where it fits. I am the inner circle.

In other words our commitment to Christ is not an accessory commitment it is what we'd call a keystone commitment. It's not an accessory commitment it's what we'd call a keystone commitment.

Everything else is downstream of that. Family commitment downstream of faith commitment. We don't abandon it for our faith we filter it through our faith.

[21 : 46] We don't abandon other commitments for our faith we filter them through our faith. This is not an issue of legalism or moralism it's an issue of priorities.

It's not an issue of obeying rules or not an issue of what our heart loves more than anything else. In other words everyone has an ultimate priority.

Everyone has something they love and value more than anything else. the question is which story do we live in? Which horizon do we set our eyes on?

Everyone has a keystone everyone has a horizon line everyone has an ultimate loyalty. For many people today their ultimate loyalty is freedom from all commitments.

I want to make sure I'm free whatever shows up. For other people their ultimate loyalty is safety.

They never buy anything because the larger your bank account the safer you feel.

[23 : 01] Still others and this is common in our culture their ultimate horizon is pleasure and peak experiences. Jesus here tells us what our horizon line should be and is.

We fix our eyes first and foremost more than on anything else towards him and his kingdom. That is the place our eyes set.

That is what directs everything else in our lives. That is what sets every other priority. That is the filter we place everything through.

through. Now it is important as we talk about these issues of hierarchies especially as Jesus is talking about his family to have clarity about what this passage doesn't mean.

Because it would be easy at this point to take Jesus' words and to abuse it. It does not mean that we abandon our families. It means that we put them in the appropriate place.

[24 : 08] we put them in the proper place. It is not right for us to abuse this passage to neglect our families. In fact, if you're supposed to follow the will of God, if that's what determines his family, remember that the will of God includes caring for your family.

The fifth commandment, honor your father and your mother. Deuteronomy chapter 6, be diligent in instructing your children in the way of the Lord. Ephesians and Colossians teach us about being faithful spouses and parents.

And so we have found ourselves in a bad place if we confuse this passage and find ourselves so busy with Christian activity that we can't be present with our families. Something is wrong at that point.

You don't get to use, as many do, service to God as an excuse for being a poor and absent wife, husband, mother, father, son, daughter.

But in places where there's a conflict between the demands and priorities and expectations of family or anything else and the will of God, you choose and always choose the will of God.

[25 : 29] And part of God's will involves caring for your family. Now if this is confusing for you, thankfully, Jesus models this for us perfectly.

Jesus cares for his family and puts them in the right place. On the one hand, in this passage, we see that his family is not able to pull him away from his mission, his direction, and his purpose.

Right? If he had, he would have left, stopped teaching, scaled down his ministry, returned back to Nazareth. Jesus doesn't do that. On the other hand, Jesus cares faithfully for his family.

You'll remember John chapter 19, Jesus is dying on the cross in agony. And what does he make sure happens? He makes sure his mother is cared for.

Okay? Jesus shows us how to balance it. On the one hand, he keeps his mission first. On the other hand, he is faithful to his family.

[26 : 32] He doesn't cut them off. He's not estranged from them. Jesus cares about them. They are just not his fundamental orientation. Instead, Jesus is oriented around a mission and a direction and a purpose.

In fact, many have pointed out that putting God first is what actually allows us to love our families rather than neglecting them on the one hand or idolizing them on the other.

And when we idolize them, we put pressure on those around us that they are impossible to bear up under. And so it's in putting God first that we're able to be faithful to our families.

That then is the priority of the kingdom, that it comes first, it comes before anything else. We also see in this passage not just the priority of the kingdom, but the mark of the kingdom.

I've told you that when you read the Bible, bookends are extremely important when a story is broken up as it is here. Another element to watch out for as you read scripture is final statements.

[27 : 42] Closing statements in stories often, especially when they're stated by Jesus, give us the main point. They give us the conclusion. They explain what's going on. And here we have such a final statement in verse 35.

For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother. This gives us two things, both an encouragement and a challenge.

First, the encouragement is the inclusion that Jesus has here. Jesus includes anyone and everyone who follows after him in his family.

God makes these people his family. That's why we confessed this morning about the doctrine of adoption. And so people might come and say, hey, you should visit our church.

It is like a family. There's a sense in which that's true. There's also a sense in which it's not true. It's not like a family. It is a family.

[28 : 49] God has set this as the greatest priority for us socially and relationally. You, if you follow after him, are part of his family, not just in your relationship to him, but in your relationship with others.

And so that's why I say every Sunday that we are following Jesus together as one community. If you've seen or read any story or movie about someone who's adopted or in an orphanage, you know there are some orphans who are more attractive to be adopted than others.

You know that there's discussion about, oh, I'm too old enough to be, I'm too old to be adopted. I'm not young enough. I'm not cute enough. I'm not sweet enough.

Only certain types of people get chosen. The good news of this passage as Jesus tells us that those who obey his will are part of his family is that there is no such thing as too old or too young or too cute or too hard.

Jesus will adopt anyone and everyone who follows after him in his will. His invitation to follow him is for anyone who receives it.

[30 : 04] Jesus will adopt you. That's the good news of the mark of the kingdom. There's also some bad news.

The bad news is you do not belong to Jesus because of familiar or social ties. Church membership and attendance does not guarantee that you are with Jesus.

The people who are with him have a mark and a sign and it's this. They do the will of God. Yes, Jesus takes us as we are and he never leaves us there.

Yes, Jesus saves us apart from anything we have ever done and those he saves, he sanctifies. Our holiness as we follow after the will of God is the sign that he has chosen us as his sons and his daughters.

And so there's a radical offense here and a radical love. And the radical love is this, adoption is always available.

[31 : 19] Adoption is always an option. Jesus is always willing to adopt. He doesn't rule people out based on age or desirability. Instead, his call to follow him is a call that's extended even now to you right here in this place.

Jesus is still calling people to follow after him and those who do, do it because they are his family, because he's adopted them and received them.

Amen. Now we've looked this morning at some heavy things. The heavy call to make Jesus the ultimate, the greatest priority in our lives.

And the sobering reminder that the mark of that family is one of obedience. And it would be easy in the face of those things to feel a weight that's impossible for us to carry by ourselves.

A call that's impossible for us to answer alone. Thankfully, the good news of the gospel is that God always enables and empowers what he commands.

[32 : 39] It is impossible, in other words, for us to fix our eyes on the right horizon line by ourselves. And thankfully, God has not left us to do that.

We see a similar sentiment to this passage in John chapter 14. If you have your Bible with you, I invite you to turn there with me. And John says this of Jesus' words in verse 15, if you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Thankfully, that's not all John says. God's grace always comes before obedience or commands. And if you're familiar with John chapter 14, you know before Jesus ever says that, he says this, let not your hearts be troubled.

Believe in God. Believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and I will take you to myself that where I am, you may be also.

[33 : 56] Horizon lines are what we believe about the future. Jesus here, before he tells his people that if they love him, they will keep his commandments, gives them a picture and a vision of the future that he has for them.

It's one of a family. What does a family have? It has a home. Jesus reminds his people that he is preparing a place for them.

It is not up to us, brothers and sisters, to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps to try to figure out how we can make Jesus our number one priority and follow after his will.

No, Jesus comes first with his grace, reminding his people that he is a father who prepares a home for them. He presents that vision and that picture to us that we would fix our eyes on it and see it as our future that is more beautiful and more glorious than anything else.

He shows us his promises and his provision before he ever gives a command. Even more than that, Jesus doesn't just tell his people here that he has a home for them.

[35 : 03] He reminds them of perhaps what is more important than that, that a family is a place where there is presence and access and fellowship and love. And so immediately after he tells them that love equals obedience, he reminds them in verses 16 and 17, and I will ask the father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever.

Even the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him, you nor knows him. You know him for he dwells with you and will be with you.

Jesus, hard reminder and command in this passage that he comes before anything and everything else that he's calling his people to obedience and that is their mark and sign, rests and only rest on God's grace and provision as he reminds us of what he has prepared for us in the future and the way he by his spirit meets us now, today, in the present.

And so it's as we embrace and receive that grace, as we look to what God has prepared, is preparing and has given to us that we are able to follow after him.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus calls you to follow him. He offers to make you his family. He offers you more than anyone or anything else can give you.

[36 : 47] Will you? For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother. Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven, we thank you for this family that you've given us. We thank you that you always enable and empower what you command and that you meet us first with your grace.

We thank you most of all that you do that in your son and our savior, Jesus Christ. And so we ask that you would set our eyes on the right horizon. That we would love you and follow you more than anything else.

We ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen.