

Who Is My Family?

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Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church

Pastor Tyson Labuhn

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

It seems like most people have a need to belong. While people around the world join different groups and organizations to fulfill that need, we know of course how important it is to be part of a family. We also know that when we belong to a loving, Christian family, there's a sense of joy that is unmatched in our world today. Maybe we've all missed this throughout the pandemic...our church family.

Because it's not just fellowship with other Christians, but rather it's that sense of belonging to a loving, Christian family that many look for in a church. So, what it means to be part of Jesus' family is important to us. And in our text for today, when Jesus asks the question "***who are my mother and my brothers?***" We all should've paid a little more attention at that point because the answer has significant implications for those of us who belong to the family of God.

To give you a little context, in Mark 3:20, Jesus had returned to His adopted home of Capernaum. Even though His ministry had been rejected in Nazareth, many people came that had seen Him in Capernaum. So much so that it was hard for Jesus and His disciples to sit down and have a meal together. And because His ministry was expanding quickly outside of Nazareth, when Jesus' own family heard what was happening, they thought that He was out of His mind. So they decided to go and put a stop to it all. And yet, upon hearing this, the scribes, who had come down from Jerusalem who were threatened by His growing ministry, decided

to help discredit Jesus by saying that His power came from – the prince of demons – otherwise known as Beelzebul.

Jesus decides to confront them by saying how can Satan – who gives the demons their power – how can he cast himself out? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And when He did that, not only did He warn His family, but also those church leaders from Jerusalem. Because if they continue their blasphemy – their irreverence toward God and that which is sacred would only lead to unbelief and end up in damnation.

Even though many in the crowds that gathered around Jesus saw Him as their Savior, certainly His own family, as well as the scribes, didn't quite see Him that way. And their questioning of Jesus, which came out of their own uncertainty of who Jesus was, was only helping to create more divisiveness. And it's this divisiveness, that the devil uses to cause division within a church, again and again. In the past, it's brought about heated debates surrounding communion – Common Cup or not, the role of women in the church, and the music and style of worship. Thank goodness here at Our Savior's Way we have been able to avoid this by making it possible for all to come and worship in a different style, in a way that is God-pleasing, where we can truly worship God wholeheartedly. Because even when there is agreement on the teaching of the church, Satan will still work on people with different personalities in order to discredit the church and bring about division.

Sometimes, you can recognize it happening in yourself when all you can see are the faults and shortcomings of someone else. And if you let it fester too long, it will work on you and try to prevent you from loving your neighbors as yourself, tempting you to make false accusations against another. If that's happening with you

right now, maybe it's revealing something about yourself that you don't like. That God wants you to work on so that you might be able to grow and heal in a way that is pleasing to Him. Because this doesn't just include the things that we can see, feel, and touch, but it also represents an internal battle with our sinful nature.

Our sinful nature is all too easily provoked by the many distractions in the world as well as by Satan himself. And yet, I want to remind you something that St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "**...our struggle isn't against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.**" (Eph 6:12) And when we get caught up by our sinful nature, all too easily we can forget this.

So who belongs to Jesus' family? Certainly not those who are divisive. Because, when Jesus' mother and brothers came to talk with Him in person, the crowd was so large that they had to send a message to have Jesus come out from among the crowd so they could do so. Then, Jesus said something that is surprising even for us today....He looks around at all those who were sitting around Him and said, "**Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.**" You see, according to Jesus, those who are part of Jesus' family are those who do the will of God.

While that doesn't always mean that things will be wonderful or become easier for us, or that life will always go our way, it does begin with an open heart, ready to listen to God's directing. For even though we might experience suffering, sorrow, sickness, and heartache, we can always be thankful that we're part of His Kingdom, accomplishing the good that He wants to accomplish in and through us, knowing that He is working all things out for good. For if you recall, even Jesus prayed in the Garden of

Gethsemane, ***“Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”*** (Matthew 26:42).

As cute as babies are, when we’re born, each of us is born sinful, - enemies of God - and are in need of His Grace. But God changes that for us. He reaches out and makes us His own through His Word and Sacraments. At Baptism, through simple water and His Word, He washes away our sins in a way that we can see, feel, and touch. And He gives to us His Spirit to guide and direct us according to His will.

And in Holy Communion, He reminds us of the sacrifice that He made for us on the cross when He gave His very body and blood for us on the cross so that we might be forgiven and forever changed. And in faith, we might go out into this world to do His Will. When that happens, He makes us examples of His light to a world that is often darkened by sin.

While some still might lose touch with their immediate families, they certainly don’t lose their sense of belonging. Because as Christians, we’re members of God’s family as we do His will in our lives. And even when distractions try to take us away from Him, His Spirit calls us back to the Father. There is nothing that can separate us from His love for you. And so, you see, my brothers and sisters in Christ, with sincere and open hearts, we’re called to do His will. We belong to Jesus’ family, and together, by faith, doing His will, we are ***“... a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that [we] may declare the excellencies of Him who called [us] out of darkness into His marvelous light.”*** (1 Peter 2:3)

In Jesus’ name, Amen.