

“AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY IN CHRIST.”

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Scripture Texts: Mark 3:20-35

Introduction.

Do you feel full now that I have read that passage? You should, you just ate a Mark sandwich. It has two pieces of bread and a piece of meat. There're nine of these sandwiches in Mark's gospel. It's one of his unique writing characteristics. Mark likes to use these sandwiches to highlight major themes and important doctrines.

The theme of Serve this year is Authentic Community and the theme text is Mark 3:20-35.

This morning we will focus on the bread, and on who Jesus' authentic family is. Notice the setting of Mark 3:20-21 and Mark 3:31-35. Jesus is in a house surrounded by a crowd and Jesus' family is on the outside looking in.

Mark 3:20-21, when Jesus became uncool.

Jesus was cool at first, doing amazing miracles and attracting lots of attention and big crowds. But His coolness was wearing off. He was hated by the leaders and important people, He became the target of slander and ridicule. He was despised by many, but now it reaches a new low.

It's one thing when your enemies misunderstand you and are out to get you, but it's a whole other thing when it's your own family that's out to get you, when those who should be advocates become adversaries.

Jesus was starting to tarnish their good name. They started to distance themselves from Him. They said he was out of His mind, a madman, a mental health case. Think about it, let this soak in for a minute. This is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

This man is the radiance of God's glory, in whom dwells the fullness of God (Colossians 1:15, 19). Surely the light and power of the Holy Spirit must have radiated from all His good words and works. Surely they too must have been amazed at His authority for no man spoke as Him, and they must have marveled at His miracles.

But the human mind is capable of staggering blindness and ignorance in the light of such stunning evidence. Those closest to Him judge Him to be insane. Friends, we are capable of this. In fact, countless Christians are guilty of this all the time. We can be made to feel Jesus is crazy.

How often have Christians remained silent when the enemies of God's Word make fun of Christians and their beliefs about morality, sexual purity, the necessity of Christ for salvation or any number of other subjects? How often have we been ashamed or embarrassed about some Biblical truth when it's made fun of?

"You don't really believe Jonah was swallowed by a big fish do you? And that Red Sea stuff, give me a break? Demons in a bunch of pigs, really? And all the killing in the OT, are you in favor of that? What kind of a God does that? Creation in six days, you really are out of your mind aren't you?"

"You think Jesus is the only way to heaven, well what about everyone else, where do you get off being so narrow-minded? There are lots of other gods you know, that's just your interpretation."

Do you feel yourself shrinking back, do you feel yourself wanting to distance yourself from Jesus and the Bible? Do you feel yourself not wanting to look insane like Jesus and the Bible?

When Jesus' approval ratings start dropping do we want to run to another candidate?

It's rather telling that we can be zealous about sports or politics or technology, about iPhones vs. Androids, or Facebook vs. Instagram, but if we're zealous about religion, about our faith we're a fanatic or an extremist, we're obsessing.

A person can injury their health and well-being excessively pursuing business opportunities or making a living and he's considered a hardworking, diligent man. But wear yourself out in ministry, well that's crazy, you need more balance. Jesus' family saw He wasn't eating or sleeping and was spending all His time with crowds talking crazy talk.

The things of the Lord and the things of the Spirit are foolishness to the world. Flesh and blood will never understand our love for God, our passion for the things of Christ, our desire to serve God or our love for the people of God. But don't let that put you off or shame you. To spend yourself for Christ and His kingdom is to store up treasures in heaven. Give all you have and all you can to His kingdom and His glory.

Mark 3:31-35, Jesus' authentic family.

Jesus was fully human. He had blood relatives. He had a mother and brothers and sisters.

Mark 6:3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses [Joseph] and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?

How ironic that His mother and brothers are standing outside, on the outside of the crowd. Usually at a home the family is in the inner circle and the crowds are around them. They are not in the inner circle.

Friends, standing on the outside is a dangerous place to be. It says you're holding Jesus at arm's length, that you might leave at any moment. Don't stiff arm Jesus, don't hold Him out there.

Don't stand on the outside with false assumptions. Don't maintain a cool distance with Jesus or a casual attendance to spiritual things, come into the warmth of the inner circle, come to His feet and sit down.

His blood relatives thought they had a claim on Him but they didn't. And those who sat at His feet, though once outsiders, hear these hope-filled words that they belong to Him.

It's interesting to read the books of James and Jude, both written by Jesus' brothers, and neither of them plays up that they were His brothers. They understood that the physical relationship wasn't what counts, it's the spiritual relationship that matters.

If you were the brother of Jesus, how would you start a letter? If you knew Jesus as only a few could, if you had eaten at the same table, shared the same house, played in the same places, grown up together how would you write?

“Robert, born of the sacred womb of Mary, sibling of the Savior of the world, confidant of the Messiah.”

Both of them began their letters, “a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.” To James and Jude the higher honor was to be Christ's servant not Christ's brother. They were brothers not because Mary was their mother, but because they were servant followers of Jesus. Authentic community happens when we all know we are servants of Christ and each other.

Jesus says two things about family here.

First, Jesus places His spiritual family ahead of His physical family. He gives His first loyalty to His spiritual family and He calls His spiritual family to give their first loyalty to Him.

Have you ever considered why there aren't those long genealogies in the NT like in the OT? OT authentic community was based on physical blood, you had to be of the tribe of Israel. NT authentic community is based not on the blood in your veins, but on spiritual blood of Jesus.

Second, Jesus says His spiritual family isn't limited the way a blood family is. His spiritual family is open to whoever does the will of the Father. When we do the will of our Father in heaven, it shows we are identified with Christ, who Himself did the will of His Father.

Whoever does the will of my Father, what is that?

What does that mean? It doesn't mean know the will of my Father or hear about it or talk about the will. It means do the will of my Father, but what does that mean?

From the Sermon on the Mount we might remember that:

Matthew 7:21 Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

What does it mean to do the will of the Father? In our text Jesus looked at those sitting at His feet. Those who are at the feet of Jesus are those who are closest to the heart of Jesus. These are His true brothers and sisters and mothers. Doing the will of the Father is gathering at the feet of Jesus, submitting yourself to Jesus and listening to what He says and doing it, obeying it.

Instead of being related by blood, we are related by obedience.

Luke 9:35 A voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!"

But we have to dig deeper, the will of God means more:

He hears the Word of God by faith and obeys it.

He feels the conviction of the Holy Spirit concerning sin and repents, and ceases to do evil.

He labors to lay aside the weight of sin, every sin that besets him.
He forsakes his own righteousness and acknowledges his need of a Savior.
He puts off the old man and puts on the new man Christ.
He hears the call of God to be holy and depends on the Holy Spirit to be so.
He strives to mortify the flesh and walk in the Spirit, actively cultivate the fruit of the Spirit.
He shows He loves God by his obedience to His commands.

But beware. We are foolishly if we assume God's will for us will not be hard or call for sacrifice; that God would never bring any sadness into our life or make our journey difficult.

Jesus came to do the will of His Father and what happened to Him? He is called a devil.

What if obedience to the will of God is hard, what if His will is the opposite of your will? What if every day Satan tries to weaken your resolve to do God's will, and tries to wear you down and get you to give up and stop even trying? What if there is a price to pay and the cost is high? What if doing the will of God will make you look like a fanatic or madman? What if it won't be very satisfying or fun or easy or quickly rewarding?

What will happen if we do the will of God?

You will be my brother and sister and mother.

What a great honor Christ pays to those who love Him and listen to Him and do His Father's will. What a remarkable condescension that the Son of God should include us in His family and not only that but give us such a place of honor, as brothers and sisters.

Does this privilege matter to you? Does it make a difference? What are you willing to give up for it? What are you willing to endure for it?

He gives us His name and a place of belonging in His family. We're welcome at His table and made joint heirs in His inheritance. He's not ashamed of us and freely confesses us before angels and before His Father in heaven.

He's our kinsman redeemer who loves us, provides for us, talks freely with us, withholds nothing good from us, lays down His life for us, and prepares a place for us with Him.

I John 3:1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

You're not alone, you're never without family. If you have no one in this world, you have Christ and all who are in Christ. If you are widowed or single or a single parent or in a family but it's fractured and broken, and you feel alone, on the outside looking in, if your heart belongs to Jesus then you are His and He is yours, you are family.

Though everyone forsake you, there's one who will never forsake you. We have a friend and advocate, a redeemer who is mighty and He shall plead our cause (Proverbs 23:11).

Psalm 27:10 My father and my mother have forsaken me, but the LORD will take me in.

Conclusion.

Think about what Joseph did for His eleven brothers and father in Egypt. How richly and bountifully and generously did Joseph deal with his family? How much more will our elder brother Christ do for us, His brothers and sisters, when we come poor and needy. What a glorious day it will be, what a reunion, what a gathering at His table in His palace in heaven.

The Christian church is the largest family on earth. We are Christ's brothers and sisters, and brothers and sisters with each other. You have closer union with the believers in this room than you do with the unbelieving members of your immediate family.

This is the best family, the most authentic family we can have. Let me leave you with the greatest mark of authentic community.

John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

Prayer: Holy Father in heaven, we thank you that you have called us out of the world, called us from standing on the outside, into the fellowship and family of Jesus. By the power of your Spirit enable us now to walk in a manner worthy of our calling, and give us the unity of your Spirit through the bond of peace, with all humility, gentleness and patience. Come Holy Spirit, apply this Word to your hearts for the glory of Christ and His Church.