Jesus’ True Family

Mark 3:20-35

Key Verse: 3:35 “Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

November is the month of family. On Thanksgiving Day all families gather their home and have Thanksgiving dinner. Family is the symbol of love, comfort, and protection. Family is the shelter of our soul. Today I want to talk about family, especially Jesus’ family. Jesus’ new teaching continues in chapter 3. In today’s passage Jesus teaches us two things: 1. Eternal sin which cannot be forgiven. 2. Jesus’ true family.

First, eternal sin which cannot be forgiven. (20-29) Last week we studied that Jesus appointed the twelve disciples. His twelve disciples were chosen from ordinary people. Jesus called them with a great plan and a big picture to save the world through them. After appointing the twelve, Jesus entered a house, probably one of his disciples. Again, a crowd gathered. Because of the increasing and demanding crowd Jesus and his disciples were not even able to eat. (20) When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “***He is out of his mind.***” Jesus’ family thought that Jesus went too far. They were concerned about Jesus’ health, but didn’t understand Jesus’ devotion to God’s will. They had a well-intentioned but misplaced opposition. We are also sometimes misunderstood by people when we are all in Jesus. Jacob Townsend, a friend of Michael Lanier, went to India as a missionary. Michael’s mother couldn’t understand Jacob by saying what Jesus’ family did to Jesus. Many UBF missionaries, including myself, experienced the same accusation from our family members when we decided to follow Jesus. This reminds of what Jesus said in Mark 6:4. “*A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home*.”

The accusation against Jesus followed by the religious leaders. Look at verse 22. “***And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said,*** “***He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.***” The teachers of the law accused Jesus of driving out demons by the power of demons. Beelzebub is known as the lord of the flies, the lord of demons. The book “the lord of flies” describes the abomination of desolation with the image of a pig head. Jesus defended the work of God and challenged their wrong logic with the parables. Look at verses 23b-26. “***How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come***.” What Jesus said is true. How can Satan drive out Satan? There is a saying, “United we stand, divided we fall.” Anyone who is divided himself or herself cannot stand. So, what the teachers of the law accused Jesus was proved wrong.

Jesus taught them that driving out demons was the powerful work of the Holy Spirit. He said in verse 27. “***In fact, no one can enter a strong man’s house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man’s house***.” Here a strong man indicates demons. Demons are strong entities which we cannot control. But the Holy Spirit, a stronger one, appeared, tied up the demons, and finally cast them out of its house. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of power and wisdom. It is the spirit of the Almighty God who created the whole universe and rules the world. When we help people who are possessed by demons, we must pray and ask for the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus gave his disciples authority to drive out demons through the power of the Holy Spirit. We who are called and work for Jesus have power and authority to drive out demons when we depend on the Holy Spirit. We cannot do so alone, but the Holy Spirit of the Mighty God can do. Amen!

Now Jesus counter-accuses the teachers of the law. Jesus accused them of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Look at verses 28-29. “***Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.***” Jesus accused them of committing eternal sin which cannot be forgiven. This is surprising and new teaching. We know that all sins can be forgiven by God. This is because our God is love, merciful, compassionate that no one wants to perish. We also believe that Jesus died for all our sins on the cross; Adam’s original sin, sins we committed in the past, sins we commit at present, and sins we are committing in the future can be forgiven. All these are true. Still, Jesus warns us that there is eternal sin which cannot be forgiven, which is blaspheming against the Holy Spirit.

How do people blaspheme against the Holy Spirit? We categorize in three factors: 1. Intentionally and consistently hindering the work of the Holy Spirit. This is different from sinning in ignorance for some certain periods like Saul did against Christians before he was converted. But, like the Pharisees the sin of those who intentionally and consistently disturbed Jesus’ work cannot be forgiven. 2, Intentionally and continually disobey the will of God. Jonah disobeyed God, but he repented. But Cain disobeyed God and didn’t repent. After he was rebuked by God, he killed his brother Abel. He didn’t repent after that, but wandered in the darkness. 3. Intentionally and continually deny Jesus Christ. Even though the Pharisees heard about Jesus and realized that Jesus is the Son of God, they would not accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. They refused to listen to the voice of their conscience and denied Jesus. They accused Jesus, saying, “***He has an impure spirit.***” (30) God knows our hearts and judges our motivation. He blesses those who are humble and oppose those who are proud. But our God is patient. He waits until all repent and be saved. I pray that we may not sin against the Holy Spirit and die eternally. Jesus died on the cross shedding his precious blood to forgive all our sins. His grace of salvation is given to all those who accept him. May God help us to live a life worthy of his sacrificial love and life. Amen!

Second, who are my family? (31-35) While Jesus was teaching, his family arrived. His mother and brothers stood outside expecting him to come out right away to greet them. But his teaching continued. So, they sent someone to call him. **A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you**.” (32) How did Jesus respond to them? Jesus asked, “***Who are my mother and brothers?”*** (33) Jesus continued. Look at verse 34. “***Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother!***.” (34) From a human point of view, Jesus’ word sounds rude and disrespectful. But from God’s point of view Jesus teaches us a new concept of family. What was the first family in human history? Yes, they are Adam and Even in the garden. God established the first family between male and female and blessed them to become fruitful and increase in number. The first family was established by God, for God, and in God. So, with what God anointed and blessed men cannot break. This is the original concept of family from God’s viewpoint

Jesus teaches us that there are two kinds of family: physical family and spiritual family. Physical family is based on physical tie while spiritual family is based on spiritual tie. Jesus’ mother and brothers are Jesus’ physical family while Jesus’ disciples are his spiritual family. Our physical family is temporal while only living on this earth, whereas our spiritual family is eternal even after we die. Jesus had dual family ties, physical and spiritual as we do today. Jesus didn’t ignore his physical family, but he put his priority to his spiritual family. Jesus was a good son to his mother Mary as the Son of Man, he was also a good son to the Heavenly Father as the Son of God.

Jesus said that our family are those who do the will of God. What is doing the will of God? How can we know and do the will of God? We find some answers from Jesus’ prayer and from Paul’s letter. Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, “*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*” (Mt 6:9-10) God’s will is to glorify God’s name and to bring his kingdom to this world. Pastor Kevin Albright in Chicago UBF interpreted in this: To do the will of God is to love God and love others. The will of God is also to believe Jesus and put his teaching into practice. When we love God and love others, we glorify his name and bring his kingdom to this world.

 According to Paul, God’s will is to renew our minds and to offer our body as living sacrifice. Paul said in Romans 12:1-2, which says, “*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by renewing your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will*.” In short to do the will of God is to repent of our sins and devote ourselves to the work of God. Here offering your bodies as living sacrifice means devote yourselves to God. Spend more time with God through personal prayer and Bible study. Keep the Sabbath day holy by attending Sunday worship service and participate in the service of God. Follow Jesus as his disciples. All these are God’s will. We always struggle between doing God’s will and my own will. Apostle Paul did the same. But he denied his will to obey God’s will.

Not long after I arrived in America in 1989, I stopped at a gas station to fill gas. One white gentleman next to me asked me if I am a Christian. I wondered how he knew I was a Christian, but I answered ‘yes.’ Then he said, “Man, you are my brother.” I was so impressed and comforted by his welcoming greeting from a stranger in a gas station when I was still struggling to adjust to the new environment in America. Yes! Whoever does the will of God is our family. All you who came here to worship the Lord are my brothers, sisters, and family members. We have the same and one father, our Father in heaven. We share his spirit which gives us eternal life in Christ Jesus. You are so precious to God and to me. Indeed, I have two brothers and three sisters in Korea, but my affection for my coworkers, my spiritual family here are far more than my physical family in Korea. What Jesus said is true, “*Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.*” Remember that Jesus died on the cross to make us his family. Jesus called us to make many others to become God’s family. In this coming Thanksgiving Day I pray for God’s blessing on all your family gatherings spiritual and physical. I pray that we may live for the glory of God and work for the kingdom of God while we are still young and healthy. May God make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Amen!