

6.10.18 How Do You Spell FAMILY

Psalm 138

Mark 3:20–35

The text this week is a challenging one. We continue our journey through Mark, and Jesus is in Capernaum. He is attracting enormous crowds. He is healing the sick, assembling his disciples, announcing that the world is finally going to be the way God wants it to be and it's happening now. Jesus is responding to God's call to become who he has been created to be, and he's making quite a stir. His family is appalled that he is drawing so much attention. They think he has gone mad and, the scribes are fast to attack him.

And then Jesus makes a statement that seems to contradict the importance and honor of family, asking: "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And saying: "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." This passage asks us to wrestle with what family means.

How do you respond to this kind of talk? Most people would say family is a good thing. In fact it is a foundation to the health of our society. Churches say, "this is a family church." Or people say this church "feels like family." You have heard people say "I would do anything for my family." You have heard people say, "if my family was threatened, I would do anything to save them."

Some people's experience of birth family is full of love and caring. Some people's experience of birth family is full of tragedy, hurt, and pain. Jesus says to remember what we say at baptism when the whole congregation commits to raising a child in the faith, teaching God's love and grace.

Jesus is not against the family. It is not that the Bible is questioning the value of good family relationships. It is Jesus wanting us to think about what it means to be related to each other as family through Jesus. What does it mean to be related to each other through our baptism? The church has a larger idea of family. Every time we have a baptism, we say it takes the whole congregation to raise a child in the unconditional love and unending grace of God. It takes the gifts of everyone to nurture a child of God of any age.

Jesus' understanding of family is not just some pie-in-the-sky spiritual value. It is intended to have consequences, to change the way we are and the way the world is. Consider the state of the world and our own country in particular. What would Jesus' have to say about our attitudes toward immigrants or to a student lying dead in a classroom? Is that what Jesus had in mind: a world of hate, fear, prejudice, and judgement, a world in which whoever has the most power wins? If that isn't what Jesus had in mind, Jesus' hope has to lie in us becoming the strong people of God we are created to be.

Family is not people we are related to by blood, but rather related to by trust in God and Jesus. Jesus says, "I have not come to assault the family, I have come to expand the definition of family. Anybody who tries to follow my life and teachings and does the will of God, they are my mother and my brother and sister." I think Jesus wants us to think about what it means to be baptized into the family of God and to have a bigger, wider understanding of the meaning of family.

How do we spell FAMILY? How do we define family? Is blood thicker than obedience?

Think about it – Pray about it – Live it

Bob