

Mark 3:20-35
My Dad is bigger than your dad
Crossroads November 12, 2006

The passage for today begins in a peculiar way, ends with an unexpected conclusion to the beginning and sandwiched in-between is one hot potato. I'd like to spend a couple weeks looking at this. First I want to look at verses 20-21 and 31-35. Next week we will look at 22-30 and tie it all together.

A couple general observations:

First, we find Jesus is drawing a hard line...much like kids would have done years ago...drawing a line on the ground as a challenge for those who are going to be on his side or on the side of his adversary...its a stand on my side if you think my Dad is bigger sort of event...but in this case the sides are eternal.

Secondly, it is clear that what Jesus holds forward is boldly contrary to what we often experience in our world. This teaching is definitely from the perspective of one who sees clearly and understands perfectly the Kingdom of God that we do not see nor completely understand. By the way, did you know that Jesus taught more about the Kingdom of God than anything else?

In this passage we begin with a peculiar picture. Jesus is surrounded en mass again...nothing unusual there but among the crowd is his family. This meant that they may have walked about thirty miles to be there. They were there "to take charge of him" because they believed, "he was out of his mind".

Strange isn't it? We are reading here that Jesus' own family had come to the conclusion that Jesus had lost his marbles and it was time to get him home. It doesn't quite fit somehow. We often take for granted that Jesus' family were right there with him in every way. From this we get the idea it wasn't necessarily so or at the least they didn't understand what he was doing. Lets look at why his family might think this:

First, Jesus left a job as a carpenter to become a vagrant, homeless, wandering preacher. He had left a sensible living for what was becoming more and more disturbing for the family.

He had thrown away the security of a job and a family

He had thrown away safety to embark on a risky life that they still didn't understand

He had shown himself totally indifferent to the verdict and norms of society.

Secondly, Jesus was on direct course for a head on collision with the religious leaders. There are always people whose opposition can be dangerous...people who can do real harm. Everyone knew that no one could take on the Scribes and Pharisees and the

orthodox leaders and hope to get away with it. Jesus was heading for real trouble and his family wanted to get him to safety.

Third, Jesus was beginning to collect a strange little society of his own. They were not the sort a person would want to settle a career around...a tax collector, an extreme nationalist, a few strong headed fishermen. Who would pick a bunch of friends like that? What was he doing...

They must have thought he was taking risks no sensible person would take. In that day, there must have been a great deal of speculation and question coming back toward the family from the surrounding community. Instead of supporting him, standing up for him in the face of the Scribes, Pharisees, and leaders...they said he was crazy.

Once, when Jesus was enumerating the things that a person might have to face if they followed him, he said (Matthew 10:36) **A person's enemies will be members of his own family.** You will need to read Chapter 10 of Matthew to get the fuller idea and context but Jesus' point is that there is nothing more important than God – Not fathers, mothers, wives, children, friends, work, careers, not even fishing...nothing can come before God. To place anything before God is to relegate Jesus to second, third, or whatever...place. He said if you accept me you accept the one who sent me (Matt. 10:40) and that God must be first in our lives if we are going to be worthy of him.

There are a few Kingdom of God principles to be gained in this exchange –

- God's Kingdom does not conform to the rules and norms of this world. Jesus said himself...my Kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). It won't make sense according to human wisdom.
- We should not expect being a part of God's Kingdom to be easy, understood, or even tolerated by those who do not know Jesus...because it stands against evil and evil people and reveals the truth it is inherently risky.
- It is God's and we are to present ourselves to God as living sacrifices – conforming to it as an act of worship..
- It is definitely a community whose common bonds are grace and faith that produce a shared experience of forgiveness of sin, a shared the interest in knowing Jesus, a shared obedience to God and the goal of living for him.
- It is a singular effort. There is just one Kingdom of God and we are all part of it as one family.

That leads us to verses 31-35 where we read Jesus' Mother and his brothers were there looking for him and one of the great marks of the Kingdom of God is revealed. Jesus built more than a church...he formed an eternal Community, a Kinship and Family. Jesus says "who are my mother and my brothers? Here are my mother and brothers! Whoever does God's will is brother and sister and mother."

A new family order not based on birth but a common experience of being forgiven. It is a Kingdom community and kinship created in Christ that is eternal and very real. Take a look around you...these are the people you are going to spend eternity with...please don't leave...we will all be perfected in Christ...God WILL finish what he has started in us!

It reveals something important about us. As humans we are made to seek community, to be connected in relationships. It is hardwired as a true human soul need. Community and kinship are created by shared experience. When people share life and life's experiences bonds are created. There are countless examples of this because it is a universal human need.

It seems silly to use a movie as an example but it works because it speaks to the truth - In the movie Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring – when the 9 are assigned with the task of taking the ring to be destroyed there is distrust in the ranks. Especially between a dwarf named Gimli and Legolas the elf. By the end of the story, after all the struggle, they stand together facing an impossible battle. Gimli says..."I never thought I would die beside an Elf...to which Legolas responds...how about beside a friend...and Gimli replies...yes, I could do that. Bonds of life that last a lifetime are created within people who grow up together, in survivors of harrowing experiences, team members, warriors, people who work together, live together, people who fish together, travel together, between friends, and in people who find each other in foreign countries.

A woman had a friend and they spent time together laughing and talking. Her friend died and at the funeral an acquaintance said "you will be sorry that your friend died won't you? I saw you last week laughing together in the park. You must have been great friends" "Yes", she said without a lot of grief, "We were friendly and we talked and laughed, but to be real friends you got to weep together."

Someone said – if you want to really get to know a person, find out what makes them laugh and what makes them weep.

Our life and faith struggles serve to bind our lives and bond our hearts. I for one need this from you men; A safe place to struggle and share struggles, a place to weep, a common ground to stand on, a place where I can fail, ask questions, find kinship, to know I am not alone and be kin to another. It is a soul need this world has fractured in the messages that I need to be strong to be a man.

This common experience brings people together who are very different from each other but find acceptance and encouragement– people with different backgrounds, opinions, and walks of life. Take the disciples Jesus has just begun to gather. There is Matthew, a tax collector and a fanatic nationalist named Simon the Zealot. They should have been like a can of gas and a match, like poison together but they were bound because of the common

experience of Jesus as Lord and Master. The disciples would be welded into a band of comrades because of the common experience of following Jesus.

Look around again...who of us would have brought this group together and said it was endowed with such power as to change lives and societies and worlds. A crop duster, a boat captain, a cop, a counselor for juvenile delinquents, mothers, homemakers, pilots, teachers, an editor, an author, artists, a scientist, musicians, nerds, business owners, accountants...and more. Who would or could make us into a family...except God. And that's what he has done. Let's be sure that it is the shared experience of knowing and following Jesus that binds our hearts and lives – and not our choosing.

This the great and bold Kingdom of God that Jesus holds out.

It is a universal human experience that answers a universal human need – community. We are made this way. Community, family, and kinship are hardwired into us as a need of the soul and only in the common experience of grace and forgiveness can we fully understand what God was doing in Christ.

Jesus said that THIS family is the real deal. He isn't saying our families of origin are not important. They are and they are foundational to how we see and move into life. Jesus is saying there is a greater eternal spiritual family.

The family of origin should be a place of safety, true community and of the deepest bond...God intended it to be. It should be the place where we learn faith, love, trust, hope, how to have healthy relationships, make good decisions, and gain confidence to take our place in God kingdom on this earth. However, and sadly, the family often becomes an undoing, an unraveling disconnection in our lives.

This opposing experience must be acknowledged – it is that there are many, far to many who flee from community and relationships because an important relationship was abusive and it damaged their souls. I am not talking about people who are shy and the distinction must be made: Not all who find it difficult to participate in relationships and community are wounded but almost all who have been wounded by abuse find it difficult to trust relationships and community...including a relationship with God and God's family. Just as life experiences can bind us together for life – abuse can create a damaging effect for life.

There are a few characteristics of abuse and its effect that should be mentioned simply because they surround us every day.

On the individual level, abuse is a silent assassin of the soul...silent because it is always perpetrated as a secret. Abuse can come from within the home, at school, a trusted friend, a family member, church member or leader, or a neighbor. Abuse can be sexual,

emotional, physical, verbal, or spiritual...it can be harmful attention or destructive neglect...but it has the same effect on the soul - Profound brokenness, shame, guilt, emotional deadness, and a sense of powerlessness in life.

Abusers cannot accept the responsibility for their actions so they insidiously pass along their own guilt and shame to their victims. They make them feel so bad about themselves, so dirty and worthless and guilty, that they end up believing they deserve the abuse.

There is abuse that is perpetrated in the public arena such as: Wars, especially civil and religious wars, capital punishment that is unjust but accepted as part of a political, religious or cultural system – like the crucifixion of Jesus or the holocaust. There are abusive cultural or political norms that deny or neglect human need while a few are able to live in abundance– like we see all around us here in Mexico and in our home countries. Instead of individual perpetrators they are governments or powerful groups but the effect is a powerless, hopeless people...until there is a revolutionary and a revolution.

This community, this family in Christ, this kinship of the soul – must be a safe place for all people...especially children. It must be a place where the wounded can come and begin to know, touch, experience this great gift and promise of God – love, acceptance, trust, hope, healthy relationships. Abuse stops at the gate. This is the Kingdom of God where we are brother and sister and mother.

A true story is told of Solomon Rosenberg & his family - out of WW 2 & the holocaust that took the lives of millions of people -.

Solomon Rosenberg & his wife & their 2 sons & his mother & father were arrested & placed in a Nazi concentration camp. It was a labor camp, & the rules were simple. "As long as you can do your work, you are permitted to live. When you become too weak to do your work, then you are exterminated."

Rosenberg watched his mother & father marched off to their deaths, & he knew that next would be his youngest son, David, because David had always been a frail child.

Every evening Rosenberg came back into the barracks after his hours of labor & searched for the faces of his family. When he found them they would huddle together, embrace one another, & thank God for another day of life.

One day Rosenberg came back & didn't see those familiar faces. He finally discovered his oldest son, Joshua, in a corner, huddled, weeping, & praying. He said, "Josh, tell me it's not true." Joshua turned & said, "It is true, poppa. Today David was not strong enough to do his work. So they came for him."

"But where is your mother?" asked Mr. Rosenberg. "Oh poppa," he said, "When they came

for David, he was afraid & he cried. Momma said, 'There is nothing to be afraid of, David,' & she took his hand & went with him."

That is what Jesus has done for us and this is what we do for each other in Christ. He has taken our hand and the punishment for our sin. He has taken the guilt and its shame for us and walks with us not into death but into life. This is the great Kingdom Jesus holds out and we must do all we can to make it so. God's kingdom is made up of people from all walks of life who share one thing in common...Jesus. In Jesus we find a great community built on

- the common experience of being forgiven sinners,
- with the common interest of knowing Jesus better,
- with the common obedience of serving the same master
- with the common goal of loving others as God has loved them
- the common human experience of living in a world estranged from God and full of atrocities – but built on a new order, a kingdom of God not of this world

Though Jesus' family didn't understand...this is what Jesus was doing...He was establishing a new, eternal community and a kinship of the soul that will last for all of eternity where there is no shame and where guilt has been nailed to the cross. And here today, it is real, it binds our hearts and lives into a family gathered in grace sharing His Extravagant love