

Sermon Mark 3 20 35 2<sup>nd</sup> S after Pent Series B

Sermon: 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Mark 3:20-35 (v. 34-35)

Theme: Jesus' family

Goal: We are the true family of Jesus by faith.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: I have just come back from a Family Reunion. Around 100 people gathered to celebrate the Centennial of the Winterles settling in Brazil: Cousins as far as the 5<sup>th</sup> generation after my grandparents came together to thank God and to enjoy our fellowship. If my grandparents hadn't immigrated from Ukraine to Brazil in 1912, we wouldn't be here. The relatives who remained in Kiev were all killed during the Second World War.

Some cousins came from Argentina and from various states (Provinces) in Brazil. Even though we hadn't known all of them, they are relatives and we have a blood connection. This unites us. We can never despise our family ties, even when sometimes the relationship is not the ideal one.

Our text speaks about Jesus' family: His closer family – His mother and brothers; His extended family – the Jews; and His spiritual family – whoever sits at His feet to listen to Him and does God's will.

I – Jesus' blood relation

Mark 6:3 mentions the names of Jesus' brothers: James, Joseph, Judas and Simon. It says that Jesus had sisters as well. Joseph, the step-father, is never more mentioned after Jesus was 12 years old. Maybe he had died. Even these brothers and sisters are considered by some Bible interpreters as cousins, or as Joseph's children from a previous marriage. I believe that they were really Jesus' younger brothers and

sisters.

This is not the only time in the Bible that His brothers are mentioned. John 7:5 has a sad report about His brothers: “For even His own brothers did not believe in Him.” We can imagine how difficult it was for them to see the former Carpenter that used to work with His father and brothers in the carpentry workshop in Nazareth till He reached the age of 30, now traveling all around the country, preaching, healing and proclaiming Himself as the Messiah. They want to stop His work and take Him back home. - This helps to understand Jesus' reaction in our text. He is not despising His mother and brothers. It was a matter of priority that day. And it was a big challenge to Jesus, how to handle His family and how to have patience with them. Of course He didn't want to condemn them, but He wanted to save them.

Later, we hear that they became faithful believers. The oldest of Jesus' brothers, James, became an important leader of the first Christian Church in Jerusalem. It is mentioned that the resurrected Jesus appeared to Him (1 Cor 15:7); Paul called him “a pillar” of the church (Gal 2:9) and Paul met him twice in Jerusalem (Gal 1:19; Acts 21:18); he was the chair of the first Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13); and he wrote the Letter of James. - The other brother, Jude, wrote the Letter of Jude.

## II – Jesus' extended family

The relationship with Jesus' extended family was even worse than that of His closer blood family. The Jews were all members of a big family, the descendants of Abraham. They could write down their genealogy till the 12 patriarchs and they knew their roots. It was not just an extended family, but they all shared the same culture and the same religion. And there is THE BIG root of the problem. The established church and her religious leaders, the Pharisees, Sadducee and the Teachers of the Law, didn't accept Jesus' preaching. They couldn't deny His deeds and miracles; they were visible and all testified about His

great miracles. But they interpreted and considered them as being work of the devil! And Jesus became very sad and offended because they said that “He has an evil spirit”. They officially never reconciled themselves with Jesus. On the contrary, they were fighting against Jesus till they crucified Him. They didn't realize that the crucifixion of Jesus was the peak of His ministry as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world through His blood shed on the cross. God turned their sad intention into blessing to the entire world, and rose Jesus again from the death. In His resurrection, a new family began, not only gathered by blood ties, but joined by faith and grace!

### III – Jesus' spiritual family

Jesus “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.”

Jesus' family doesn't have boundaries any more: blood, origin, age, color, race, language, culture or social standing shouldn't be reason for building boundaries around the church. “Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother” says Jesus. And John explains in his 1<sup>st</sup> letter (3:23) what the will of God is: “And this is His command: to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as He commanded us.”

This new relationship begins at our Baptism, which brings us to Jesus' true family. “No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit” said Jesus to Nicodemus (John 3:5). All who are baptized belong to the same kingdom and the same family. John explains better how this new birth happens: “To all who received Him, to those who believe in His name, He gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or husband's will, but born of God!” (John 1:12-13).

This new family gathered Jews and Gentiles in the first stage of

Christianity, and gathers everyone who believes. Paul preached in Pisidia: “Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him **everyone** who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the Law of Moses.” (Acts 13:38-39). And to the Ephesians (2:19), as former pagans, Paul wrote: “You are not longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household.”

The Africa Bible Commentary says: *“The Bible teaches that we are to love, honour and train our own biological family in the faith. But it does not stop there, for from a biblical perspective, the nature and quality of the ties that unite Christians with each other should be stronger than blood ties. What is born of the Spirit is of more value than what is born of the flesh. Thus when the Bible speaks of the church as a body of which each believer is a member, it is sounding a call to strong community life... When one member suffers, all the members should suffer. Members should care for one another. All should work together, cooperating for the common interest... The solidarity and welcome of the church should also not be reserved for blood relatives, even in the larger sense of all those from our ethnic group. Christians of all nations are equally brothers and sisters in the Christian family”* (p. 1178).

This is particularly true as FELSISA is trying to reach the different people from South Africa and even from Malawi and maybe other countries in the future, and not only to serve the founders' families. Jesus sent His disciples to make new disciples from all nations. And He says in our text: “Here are my mother and my brothers and sisters. Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.” What a blessing! “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are”! (1 John 3:1): brothers and sisters of Jesus, children of the same Father, members of the Holy Christian Church, - God's family, - the communion of Saints. Amen.

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