Mark Lesson 10 (2022)

**WHOEVER DOES GOD’S WILL IS MY FAMILY**

Mark 3:20-35

Key Verse: 3:34-35

“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.’”

Happy Father’s Day! Father’s Day Celebration occurs in most countries on the third Sunday of June. In Korea, however, there was only a Mother’s Day Celebration but no Father’s Day Celebration for many years. But now, people in Korea celebrate Parent’s Day. Whether it is Father’s Day, Mother’s Day, or Parent’s Day, it’s more like Family Day. In the book of Genesis, we see how God established the first family of Adam and Eve with their children. The book ends with a story of Jacob’s family in Egypt. Our Lord Jesus was also born into the family of Joseph and Mary and had brothers and sisters (6:3). A proverb says, “*Blood is thicker than water.”* It means that “r*elationships and loyalties within a family are the strongest and most important ones.”* All of us are born into a family. Family ties are not breakable. Its impact stays with us throughout life.

In today’s passage, Jesus talks about a different kind of family, which transcends human family ties. He said that whoever does God’s will is his brother and sister, and mother. Did he mean that we should ignore or sever our family ties? Let’s think about what he meant when he said, “Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

Before getting into today’s passage, let’s briefly review the context. Due to the growing resistance from the Jewish religious authority, Jesus often withdrew himself to a remote place. (2:1-3:6) Being aware of the murderous intent of the religious and political leaders, Jesus paid more attention to his disciples while still serving the crowds. After his prayer on the mountain, he appointed the twelve disciples as Apostles, God’s kingdom workers on earth until his return (3:7-19). In today’s passage, we see Jesus facing two kinds of opposition, a well-meant but misguided opposition from his own family and a malicious opposition from the hostile Jewish leaders.

Look at verses 20-21. “Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, ‘He is out of his mind.’” The house Jesus entered may have been the house of Simon and Andrew in Capernaum. Jesus and his disciples were unable to eat, not to mention find the time to rest, mainly because of the overwhelming demand of the crowd. I am sure that before this incident, Jesus’ family had simultaneously heard about his growing popularity and the lousy rumor about him. They had been puzzled because they hadn’t heard from Jesus directly about what was going on with him. So they got frustrated when they heard that Jesus could not eat while doing what he was doing. Concluding that he was out of mind, they came from Nazareth to bring him back home, even by force. Their reaction was well-meant but misguided. It also indicates Jesus’ strong family ties. We will consider Jesus’ family connection later in verses 31-35.

Look at verse 22. “And the teachers of the law who came from Jerusalem said, ‘He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.’” The teachers of the law who came from Jerusalem might have been special investigators sent by the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish authority. They came to discredit the ministry of Jesus. Why? Jesus’ new teachings of God’s coming kingdom offended them. Even though his miraculous healing of the sick and driving out demons proved his divine authenticity and God’s living presence through him among them, they didn’t want to admit the truth (Lk. 4:18-19). So, they hardened their hearts and demonized Jesus and his work by saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons!” The name “Beelzebub” means “the lord of flies” or “the lord of dung.” Instead of recognizing Jesus as the son of God, they demonized him as an instrument of Satan. Their accusation was malicious, intending to discredit Jesus and his ministry. Why would they do what they did? It’s because they were afraid of losing their power and position.

In verses 23-30, we read how Jesus defended himself from their malicious accusation. How do you respond to someone who charges you with being demon-possessed when you are serving the ministry powerfully? It’s easy for us to react with anger instead of responding with reason. Jesus could have become angry at their perversive and malicious accusation. But Jesus managed his anger before dealing with his opponents. When we read Jesus’ response in verses 23-30, it was a very logical defense, with no emotional outburst. His response consists of three parts, repudiation (23-26), declaration (27), and warning (28-30).

Look at verse 23. “So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: ‘How can Satan drive out Satan?” Here, I see something unique in Jesus’ dealing with his vicious opponents. He didn’t counterattack them by calling them “you liar!” or keep his distance from them. Instead, he called them over to himself, meaning he was open and ready to engage in sensible communication.

He spoke to them in parables. Read verses 24-26. “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 him and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come.’” Although there are three different parables, the primary point is the same. He was saying that their accusation against him was illogical and entirely unrealistic. Satan does not attack its subjects. So, Jesus’ driving out demons cannot be Satan’s work but God’s.

Look at 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, the strong man refers to Satan, the possession in the strong man’s house refers to humankind under Satan’s rule, and the more muscular man who can tie up the strong man refers to Jesus. Jesus declared that his power was far superior to that of Satan. Indeed, Jesus’ ministry in Galilee demonstrated the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through him.

In verses 28-30, Jesus warns of the seriousness of the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Look at verses 28-30. “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. He said this because they were saying, ‘He has an impure spirit.’” According to Jesus, all our sins are forgivable, except the sin against the Holy Spirit. The problem is that we don’t know precisely what sin is against the Holy Spirit. And it can scare many people with the fear that they might have committed an unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit.

But Mark commented in verse 30 that Jesus said this because the Jewish leaders demonized him by saying, “He has an impure spirit.” I think those who lied about Jesus by saying Jesus was demon-possessed can still be forgiven if they admit they lied and repent. But if they continue to lie, their sins are not forgivable. Pathological liars don’t have any remorse for what they lied about.

It reminds us of 1 John 1:8-10, “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.”

When Jesus said that sin against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable, he might be saying that it’s not God who sent them to hell, but they are the ones who locked themselves in hell. Forgiveness is God’s gift for us. God’s kingdom dwells in those who repent and believe the good news. C.S. Lewis said, *“the doors of hell are locked from the inside.”* (Pic#1)

 Now, Jesus is not here with us physically. But he is with us through the Holy Spirit. God’s kingdom is not just futuristic. It’s already here with us. It includes the dwelling and working of the Holy Spirit in and through those who believe in Jesus Christ.

 Verses 31-35 bring us back to the story of Jesus’ family. Look at verses 31-32. “Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, ‘Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.’” Jesus’ mother and brothers came there to take him home, even by force. They thought he was out of mind, neglecting his family members and making too much trouble, which might have been harmful to them. Even though they were not malicious like the Jewish leaders, in their ignorance and well-meaning intent, they still tried to stop Jesus from doing the will of God.

 How did Jesus respond? Look at verse 33. “‘Who are my mother and my brothers?’ he asked.” Jesus didn’t criticize his family member for trying to force him to go home. I am sure he understood the frustration of his family members. The rhetorical question, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” does not mean ignoring or denying his family members. Instead, it brings attention to the deeper issue of an authentic relationship with him. In verses 34-35, Jesus taught his followers a new family in God’s kingdom, which transcendents the binding of blood relationships.

 Look at verses 34 and 35. “Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.’” In what Jesus said, we learn that Jesus extended his family relationships beyond his family circle or even the inner circle of the Twelve Apostles. The phrase, “Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother,” shows the inclusiveness of Jesus’ family in God’s kingdom. It removes the boundaries of physical family ties, race, ethnicity, culture, religious denomination, and financial or educational background. Whoever does God’s will can be a part of Jesus’ family in God’s kingdom on earth now and forever in heaven.

So, the phrase “whoever does the will of God” is crucial to becoming Jesus’ family in God’s kingdom. Then, what does it mean to do the will of God? It’s a fundamental and essential question we should answer if we want to live a meaningful and happy life. However, it’s not easy to figure that out because it is too broad. But let’s take the life of Jesus as an example. As a young man in Israel, Jesus could have been ambitious for himself, his family, and his nation, Israel. In some sense, Jesus did live his life for himself, his family, and his country. But more fundamentally, he lived his life to obey God's ultimate will, which is to save people from their sins. During the three years of his intensive ministry in Galilee, Jesus proclaimed the good news of God’s kingdom, teaching God’s truth, healing the sick, and setting people free from the dominion of evil power in their lives. Simply speaking, he brought God’s kingdom into the lives of people. He even gave his own life as a ransom sacrifice on the cross.

When we obey God’s will through repentance and faith in the good news of God’s kingdom, we belong to Jesus’ family. Ultimately, we also need to accept that God’s will for us is to grow in the image of Christ Jesus our Lord (Ro. 8:28-30). Most people today feel overwhelmed due to the prolonged pandemic, global warming, economic downturns, and various personal life challenges. But whatever situation we face, we don’t have to panic but trust that in all things, both good and bad, God works for the ultimate good of each of us. We can also follow God’s will by doing what Jesus did in our time, bringing God’s kingdom into people’s lives by sharing the gospel and serving them with the labor of love and prayers.

We have many family members to take care of. We also have unbelieving friends, coworkers, and neighbors who may criticize us, not knowing what we do for God’s kingdom. We should not neglect them but continue to show our loving support. Someday, they will also be able to experience God’s kingdom in their hearts and lives. No matter how small things we may do, we must remember that we are building God’s kingdom. Despite what happens in the world, one thing we should not forget is that the Spirit of God is working to save and heal people. We should also remember that whoever does the will of God is our brother, sister, and mother in Christ Jesus. Happy Father’s Day!