

Title: The Family
Text: Luke 8.19-21
Theme: What it means to be in the family
Series: Luke
Prop Stmtnt: Those who hear and obey God's Word are the true members of his family.

I was going on a trip overseas and a missions agency asked me to take some money to a ministry they worked with. I agreed to do it, but then I was given thousands of dollars that I was trying to get to the right person. I was slightly terrified. I tried to put it in a secure place, but all you had to do was watch me for 1 minute, because every 45 seconds I was checking that spot to make sure I had that money. Where do you put something that you want to make sure is secure? I am preaching through the gospel of Luke, the 3rd book in the NT. Luke wrote this gospel in order to demonstrate to Theophilus (and to each of us) that his faith in Christ was absolutely secure. Luke was a doctor, and his profession flavors his writings, particularly later on in this chapter. Everything that Luke writes is under the direction of the Spirit of God, and is designed to build a case for the authenticity of the gospel. If you have given your life to Christ, your faith is grounded in the rock. You are safe. If you have placed the security of your soul, and your identity and satisfaction into the safe deposit box of Jesus, then your soul and happiness are safe forever. Every account that Luke records is designed to help you see this, embrace this and be reassured by this.

There is so much that happens in Luke 8, that it can feel as if we are drinking out of a firehose. Some of these accounts are what we think of as the big moments in the public ministry of Christ. Therefore, it would be really easy to sort of gloss over these 3 verses because at first glance they seem kind of, out of character for Christ, much less riveting. However, just like seeing Jesus, there is a lot more going on than you realize and you need to realize all that is going on.

Read Text:

Jesus had 4 brothers and at least 2 sisters. Matthew 13.55 and Mark 6.3 names his brothers; James (who became a leader in the church at Jerusalem and wrote the book of James), Joseph, Judas (who wrote the book of Jude) and Simon. At least 2 of his brothers, possibly all of them, along with Mary travel to see Jesus. When they get there, they can't get to him because the crowd is so big, so they send word to him, that his mother and brothers were standing outside the place where he was teaching and wanted to see him. To which Jesus said, "*My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.*" Whoa!

Let's say that your kid is playing or performing in a big event many hours away. You pack up the rest of the family and go through a lot of effort and hassle to get there in order to cheer for them, and encourage them. You make it just in time and you text them to let them know that you are there and would love to see them afterward. But after it is over, you get a text that says, thanks for coming, but they have plans for the evening and can't see you. Hope you have a safe trip home. That's pretty hard to take, isn't it? Is that what happened here? Is Jesus

embarrassed by his family or dismissive of them? No, in fact, when you stop and carefully consider what Jesus is saying here, it is not cringey, it is actually fascinating.

1. **The Context** (Luke 8)

In this setting, Jesus has been pressing upon people the urgency of hearing God's Word, believing it and submitting to it. That was the point of the parable of the 4 kinds of soil. It was the point of his examples of how light illuminates and exposes and now, he makes this point again. Those who hear the word of God and do it are his family. I want you to stop for a minute and just breathe the truth of that in. Those who hear the word of God and obey it are my mother and brothers. They are my family. How do I know if God is my father? Because I listen to his Word and obey him.

In view of this, let's go back to the parable of the four types of soil. Jesus does not give us percentages. He just says that there are four types of soil; hard, rocky, thorny and good. But from the parable and certainly from the rest of Scripture, we know that the good soil is clearly in the minority. Most of the time, people who hear the word of God, reject it either by outright denial, or by trying to change it.

If you embrace what Jesus says about the gospel, that is, by the death and resurrection of Christ, our sin is atoned for and by faith alone in Christ that atonement is applied to our account, and that ONLY by means of Christ can one be forgiven and declared righteous before our holy God, you are in the minority. In fact, in most circles you would be considered to be a bigot and a hater because you do not believe that all religions are equally valid or legitimate.

If you embrace what God's Word says about a sexual ethic that is, sex is the beautiful God-given gift for a man and a woman to be enjoyed in the context of the covenant of marriage, you are welcome to your opinion. If however, you believe that sex is the beautiful God-given gift ONLY for a man and a woman to be enjoyed ONLY in the context of the covenant of marriage, then you are viewed as a toxic danger to this culture, which thinks that you should be silenced, shamed and shunned.

For 2,000 years, genuine Christianity has been a minority religion. During the dark ages of the medieval church (500-1,500), the gospel was almost completely lost. Genuine believers were so few and persecuted. And then when the Holy Roman Empire held sway in Europe for 300 years (1500-1800), the old joke was that it was not holy, nor Roman and really not an empire. It's true. Then along came the Reformation, which recovered the gospel, but even still the majority of the population of Europe, much less, the world has never embraced the gospel. It is lonely being a believer. It is lonely in this world and for many of you, it is lonely in your own family. But where it really counts, you are not alone. You are not an orphan. Jesus said, "*My mother and brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.*" You have a family and your family is the one that counts forever.

Jesus said this not because he was being dismissive of his mother and brothers. In fact, we read elsewhere in John where Jesus and his disciples spent time with his mother and brothers in Nazareth. He also went back to Nazareth later in his ministry, spoke in the synagogue and the locals tried to kill him. His brothers came to him later on and tried to be his campaign managers and told him that he needed to go to Jerusalem for the upcoming festival and make his surge. At that point, the biological half-brothers of Jesus were not yet believers. They were earthly family, but not yet eternal family. My point is that Jesus did not shun or neglect his family. On the cross, Jesus made provision for Mary's care. Jesus was not dismissing his earthly family. What he was doing was elevating his eternal family. And beloved, this is what I want to both encourage you and challenge you with.

2. Theology of the family. (v.21)

Where did the family originate? It came from God. God spoke creation into existence and from the dust of the earth that he created he created man. God did not make Adam to be a husband and then a father as an experiment in social engineering. God made Adam and Eve to be in a beautiful bi-unity relationship that reflects the tri-unity relationship of God. The concept of fatherhood did not start when Eve conceived and birthed Cain, it was already in place because God is Father, Son and Spirit. Our view of family starts with God. When performing a wedding, I like to explain the significance of a wedding in the wedding. Here is part of what I often say in my charge to the bride and groom.

Day six of creation was the crowning act of God's creative works. God not only made Adam, the first human being from the dust of the earth, but God noted that there was a problem with His creation that He needed to address. The problem was not with what He had made, the problem was with what He had not made. Adam was alone and that was not good! But, get this! If the world was going to be perfect, I mean God-like perfect, complete and total perfect, then God had to perform one more act of creation. It was his final act of creation. It was the act of creation that enabled him to say at the end of the day, that now, now everything was Very Good. And that final act of creation was the creation of woman, whom He made, not out of the dust of the earth but He made her by forming her in all of her glory and in all of her beauty from a rib of Adam. She was made from man. Even in her creation, there is a unity, a oneness, a relationship, a bond that is put on display. The origin of the woman is from the very flesh of the man. And the man, after looking at, cataloging, categorizing and naming animals for the balance of the day and realizing that each of them had a companion and he did not, was apparently a bit distraught with that. For when he awoke from the divine anesthetic and said in reference to the woman, "*This at last* (like it had been a long time – of course it had been all of his life thus far as far as he was concerned) *is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.*" But, in the verse just before that, we read that it was God who "*brought her to the man.*"

In other words, God, who does all things for his glory and for the joy of his children, not only made woman for man, even as he had already made man in order to make woman, but then, God brought her to man. I take that to mean that God arranged their first meeting in such a way

that he staged it so that He could bring Eve to Adam as a gift to them both. Do you see what is going on? God is the very first father of the bride, who presides over the very first wedding. And Adam is responding in praise and worship because even though the garden was beautiful, he was alone and had no one to share this with and enjoy the beauty of the world with. But, now! Wow! Now, look at what God has done. Even as the Father walks his girl down that first aisle to give her away, the groom is singing (I take the poetry of v.23 to likely be a song). He is overwhelmed with her, yes, her beauty, but her, someone like him, someone that he can share a close companionship with, and someone that is like him, but who looks a little different, in a good way. His words, (the very first recorded words that man says) are exuberant, joyful, and expressive of and anticipatory of a deep and abiding relationship.

“She shall be called Woman.” He gives her, her name. “I will call her woman, she came from man.” He did not say that she came from me, but that she came from man. It’s like Adam knows what this means. Genesis 2 concludes with these glorious words rich in meaning, glorious in design, offering great delight to those who will abide by them. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” The intimacy between a man and a woman is to be pursued and enjoyed and celebrated in marriage. And standing over all of this is God who says that this is Very Good. God created all of this. God made man, then woman and brought her to man and delighted in doing it!

Therefore, human marriage is designed by God, blessed by God and ordained by God to be the ongoing expression of His greatest act of creation. Human marriage is based on the making of Woman out of Man. Marriage is the relationship in which man and woman are to experience being of “one flesh” since woman was taken out of the very flesh of man. Marriage is therefore sacred. (In order for that sacredness and that joy to be known and experienced, walls must be built around the marriage and all walls in the marriage must be torn down.) God is the one who joins a man to a woman so that they belong completely to the other and so that they belong only to the other. But the wedding that God performed in Genesis two and the marriage that he created was not the end.

That marriage was an illustration of a greater marriage. That marriage was the picture of another wedding. God’s plan for creating the world was to create a bride for his Son. This bride is comprised of the people of God who are loved and adored and provided for and protected and called by name by the Groom, who also happens to be the King! The people of God must have walls that protect The Marriage, while they work to ensure there are no walls within the marriage (between them and God). This unity, joy, intimacy and security were enjoyed by Adam and Eve with each other because they enjoyed it with God. The story of creation is a love story.

There is more that I say, but my conclusion is this: Your marriage is to reflect The Marriage. When you live in delight with your spouse and happily give of yourself to the other, then you are extolling and celebrating The Marriage in your marriage all of which is made possible and only made possible because of the life and death of Jesus Christ in your place. Will we be married in heaven? Yes, to Christ! Marriage and family now, are previews of the ultimate marriage and ultimate family. Here is what I want to press upon you:

A. Marriage and family matters now because it is a preview of the ultimate marriage and family.

No family is perfect. The best of families have issues to address. Some of you have really bad experiences with your family of origin, so this may be more challenging for you to imagine. But we begin our view of life and all things related by starting with God's Word. God the Father calls himself Father because from eternity past he has been the Father of the Son (Jesus). We are to look at the role of an earthly father by first of all understanding the character and role of God, the Father. The same thing is true about marriage. Marriage is designed to display the beautiful relationship that God enjoys as God AND it is intended to display the marriage of Christ to the church. The same thing is true about the family. Our earthly families are temporary entities that are designed to be a preview of and a picture of the eternal people of God. What kind of a relationship do we get to have with God now and forever? It is described as a family. We are the children, God the Father is our Father, and Christ is our older brother.

1 John 3.1-3

Jesus is the exact image of his Father. He is the perfect resemblance of God. Jesus is God in the flesh. If God the Father were to appear with a body he would look like, act like and talk like Jesus. So, when we grow in Christ-likeness, we are becoming more and more like our Father. So, when you understand the goal of the family, then you realize that the words of Jesus are not dismissing the family but are pointing to the ultimate family.

B. Your family is not forever, God's family is.

Our families are to point to a greater family. Our families are shadows, God's family is the substance. Our families are the previews, God's family is the goal. For those who are followers of Christ and do not have much of a family on earth, you do not have less in glory. You will skip the shadow and go to the substance. Therefore, the more I grow as a member of God's family, the better member of my earthly family I am. It is commendable to be committed to your earthly family, but if you do that at the expense of the church family, you are being short-sighted and missing the point and will fail to fulfill your calling to your family. Your earthly family is not to be an entity unto itself, but is to function in a way that previews God's family. That is one of the reasons why leaders (elders) in God's family (the church) are to be hospitable. Their homes are to be places of welcome and refuge because that is what God's family is.

C. God's Word creates the forever family.

Blood is thicker than water. Maybe, but blood is not stronger than God's Word. God's Word creates God's family and that family is forever.

Conclusion:

- Does your family point to the eternal family?

I think it is very important for families to eat together. In order for a family to function as a family, each member has to give up something in order to be part of the whole. That is good. We are much better together than we are separate but there is a cost to that. But, it's worth making sacrifices to eat together, to gather for birthday parties and holidays. The same thing is true and even more so about the eternal family. The church family gathers on Sundays to feed on God's Word and serve one another. I do not need to skip church in order to be with my family. That is a false either or. My church family and my earthly family are not in conflict with each other. I serve my earthly family in the ultimate sense by engaging them with the ultimate family.

- Do the priorities of your family reflect the priorities of the eternal family?

Some think that the church exists to help their family be a better family. There is certainly some truth to that. A good church will faithfully teach and apply God's Word and that will help. But that is view is incomplete. My family is actually to help the eternal family display God's glory more and more faithfully. There are all sorts of lesser things that will compete for your loyalty. Why would I sign up my kid for things that take them away from the eternal family when that is the God-given means to the ultimate goal? What kind of an eternal family do you think heaven is going to be like? Are you going to be on the sidelines? Are you going to slip in and out without connecting and committing to anyone? Are you going to just stay to yourself forever? No. If life in the eternal family is not like that, then how are you previewing that now? You realize that I say this for your joy, right?

- How does the promise of Jesus encourage you to embrace God's Word from the heart?

If you have ever had parents or grandparents that loved you deeply, then you know that at the end of a long trip to their home, would be hugs, laughter, stories, and your favorite food. Those were the things that you looked forward to. It was where you were known and loved. This is what awaits those who hear God's Word and do it, meaning this is for those who trust Christ alone.