

We Are One Family in God

Texts: 1 Samuel 8:4-11 (12-15) 16-20 (11:14-15)
2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1 (Series B. 2nd Sunday after Pentecost) Ps.138
Gospel of Mark 3:20-35

Prayer:

Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother. Throughout history family has played a major role in everyone's life. From the very beginning the concept of family has always existed. When God created the world, he looked around and saw that everything was good, except for one thing, Adam was alone.

And so, God created Eve for his companion, and thus the first family was born. This was to be one of the best blessings upon humankind. They were to be one flesh, a family unit, to work together serving and loving God and loving one another.

Families are essential for they are the building blocks of communities, and communities are the building blocks of nations. But as Genesis taught us, Satan got in, created doubt, caused division and mistrust, and just as quick as the family was created, it has been under attack ever since. I will talk more about his later.

Today's Gospel reading brings us to a challenge very early in the ministry of Jesus. Let us step back for a moment, Jesus has been baptized by John in the Jordan River and returns to his home town of Capernaum. He attends the Synagogue as was the normal custom.

As was often the case He heals an individual. This was a problem for the Pharisees because Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath... Jesus was good at breaking Sabbath rules. Yes! Jesus was good at breaking Sabbath rules in order to show that the love of God was more important than rules of religion. The Pharisees were well aware that Jesus had been healing many people.

He had healed a paralyzed man after his friends had lowered him through the roof of a house. He had healed a man with leprosy. A man with a withered arm. The crowds were increasing. But Jesus didn't play by the rules. He broke Sabbath laws.

We human beings love rules. Hence “Robert’s Rules of Order”. Jesus was dangerous to the religious establishment of his day, the Pharisees and Sadducees. He taught the truth about a just but loving heavenly Father.

Jesus challenged the rules of a Jewish religion that attempted to “earn” God’s favor. In our own culture we have seen what cancel culture can do to people. The Pharisees were trying everything to constantly discredit Jesus in the public square. To cause doubt in the public mind the Pharisees claimed that Jesus was healing people by the power of Satan.

Jesus asked a simple question. “*How can Satan drive out Satan?* If a kingdom is divided against itself it can not stand, the end has come.” His point: “The casting out demons is a demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit, which is the very power of God.”

This discussion between Jesus and the Pharisees is a warning against Satan’s lies and God’s ultimate judgment for those who reject the work of the Holy Spirit in the person of His Son, Jesus. This is the unforgiveable sin. Basically if you don’t in the forgiveness of sin which God grants to all, then you remain in your sin.

The work and miracles of Jesus cannot be separated from the Holy Spirit. All the work that Jesus does in the Gospels was accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit flowing through Him. To reject and blaspheme Jesus, is to reject and blaspheme the Holy Spirit. This is the unforgivable sin.

This event in Capernaum is one event in the ongoing battle over the control God’s chosen people. The cosmic battle between God and Satan, the fallen angel began centuries ago in the Garden of Eden. This cosmic war has just shifted to this Galilean village.

God’s creation was perfect. Human beings were created perfect in the image of God with the ability to love, reason and with the gift of free will. Satan hates God and His authority therefore he seeks to destroy God’s creation and God’s chosen people.

The words of Jesus are a warning about rejecting the work of the Holy Spirit and remaining in that total denial all the days of your life. One of the responsibilities of the Holy Spirit is to convict us of our sin, our broken commandments and warn us about the judgment of God against sin. (John 16:8)

Church father Ambrose (340 – 397 Bishop of Milan), understood the unforgivable sin to be opposing the Spirit's work. Augustine, (354 – 430) dedicated at least one whole sermon to this topic.

He stated that blasphemy isn't a specific act but a state of hostility toward God and non -repentance lasting unto death. It's a hardness of heart. A choice Pharoah made when confronted by Moses.

This Cosmic War, the battle for our souls was over the moment God promised Adam and Eve forgiveness. The ultimate defeat of Satan happened at the death and resurrection of Jesus, but he continues his guerrilla war. The Father knew if Jesus was to succeed in redeeming us, He had to be One of us.

He was born as are all humans. His mother's name was Mary. As a man, Jesus had to fulfill the laws we could not. He had to resist the temptations we do not. His death on the cross was an act of substitution. He took the punishment of God's wrath against our broken commandments.

St. Athanasius of Alexandria, Egypt wrote: "*Jesus became what we are that He might make us what He is*" When the Father said that His Son would die upon a cross, He meant it. Jesus promised that He would rise from death and defeat the grip Satan held over human hearts. He did. He kept His promise.

God keeps His promises and that's why you and I can believe Jesus when He says: Don't reject the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus defines family for himself, and by extension for us, as those who do the will of God.

And how are we to determine what is the will of God, and what is the True Source and not the earth-based gods and idols that create unquenchable wants, desires, and addictions? How do we stand together when we understand things so differently from others we hold dear?

How do we choose to be part of the family of Christ in addition to our own family? We do so by believing that Jesus Christ is our Saviour and Lord. Those who have the Son, have life eternal. Those who have the Spirit are set apart for his mighty works, and those who have God will never be disappointed. Remember the hymn,

To God be the glory, great things He hath done;
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life gate that all may go in.

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory, great things He hath done.*

Amen.

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