

“New Family” | Mark 3:20-21, 31-35

One of the themes of Mark chapter three is that of family. We find it expressed in two very different ways, yet in each instance we come to the same conclusion: when we follow Jesus, when we say “yes” to his invitation to “Come Walk With Me” we gain a new family.

Now before you get all concerned about losing the family you have, because your family is really quite wonderful, you need not lose them at all. In fact you may draw even closer to your family if they will also walk with Jesus in this life. So in addition to the wonderful family you already have, you will gain a much bigger family.

Chapter 3 opens with Jesus healing a man in the synagogue on the Sabbath. Last week we noted that the worldview of the Pharisees, their wineskins, could not contain the wonderful things God was doing in and through Jesus. When a man is made whole, there should be rejoicing and praise to God. Instead, the Pharisees start looking for a way to kill Jesus. People will go to great lengths to protect their way of life and their way of thinking – even if it is wrong. The wineskins of the Pharisees are about to burst...

Well, great crowds start to follow Jesus, people looking for a miracle. Most of these people would disappear once they got what they wanted from Jesus. A most interesting thing is how the demons reacted to Jesus. They recognized him as the Son of God when no one else did. Jesus commands them to be silent, as it was not yet his time to be revealed.

Then Jesus went up on the mountainside and called those he wanted to follow him as disciples. He actually calls them apostles, which means the sent ones, for they would be sent out with authority to preach and cast out demons. Who were the twelve apostles?

Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter);¹⁷

James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder);

¹⁸ Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot ¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. ¹

Twelve men would form the inner circle of his ministry. They would travel with Jesus, hear his teachings and see the miracles. They would see the power of God at work like no one else. They would see what God could do, so they would be ready for God to work through them when the Holy Spirit came upon them.

Twelve men, to mirror the twelve men who formed the tribes of Israel, the sons of Jacob. Jesus was forming a new nation, but something far more than that. Jesus was forming a new family.

¹ [*The Holy Bible: New International Version*](#). (1984). (Mk 3:16–19). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

The Apostle John would write:

“Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—“ John 1:12

Jesus was forming a new family, one formed by all those who put their faith in Jesus for salvation. The first members of this new family were these twelve men: fishermen, tax collector, a zealot and ordinary men without any credentials. They were all so different in personality and temperament but they were brought together as family by Jesus.

What would have happened if one of the twelve had said “No” to Jesus? I remember reading a story of an orphan girl in a country in Asia. She lived in a home for orphans and it was a usual occurrence to have people from the United States, or Canada come and choose one of the orphans for adoption. The home would often send out pictures of the children so adoptive parents knew who was their new family member. One day a family came from America to the orphanage with all the necessary paper work in hand, ready to adopt the little girl. They introduced themselves to her, and explained through an interpreter how they wanted to be her new mother and father. They would take her home to live with them where she would have her own room, new clothes, a chance to go to school and have a very good life. But the little girl said she would not go. She would not leave the orphanage and the other children. She did not want to be their daughter. They couple were crushed. The policy of the orphanage was not to force any child into leaving, so they had to send the couple away without the orphan. From our perspective, it does not make sense: think of how much more this couple could offer the girl than the orphanage. But the girl said no. Saying “no” to Jesus’ offer we lose so much more.

These twelve men said yes to Jesus, yes to following him. They would learn to work together, care for one another and not compete for position. They became family.

Jesus also had his biological family – a mother, brothers and sisters. We do not hear anything about Joseph so it is presumed something has happened to him. Scripture does not tell us.

In verse 20 we read that Jesus came back to the village and when he entered the house, people started coming from every direction, seeking a miracle from Jesus. So many people came that Jesus and his disciples did not have time to even eat. They just ministered to the people hour after hour.

Verse 21 reminds us of Jesus’ mother and brothers. They heard about how the people were demanding so much and how Jesus was working hour after hour to help the people, so they decided it was time for an intervention. They could see Jesus burning out, exhausted by the demands of the people. If he could not say “No” to the people then they would have to go and take him out of that environment. They would have to rescue him.

What was their perception of what was going on? “He is out of his mind.” Who does he think he is, thinking he can fix everyone?

Jesus' family does not understand his mission. We might assume his mother is concerned as any mother would be, watching her son pour his life out to help others. We are not sure what the brothers thought, but maybe they are jealous of Jesus, just as Joseph's brothers were jealous of him so long ago.

The family set out to get Jesus, to rescue him.

Mark sandwiches a brief story in between these verses telling of Jesus' family. The teachers of the Law who had come from Jerusalem to keep an eye on Jesus, accuse Jesus of getting his power from Beelzebub, the prince of the demons. They thought Jesus cast out demons by using the power of a demon.

Jesus points out the silliness of that position. Even Satan would not divide his own kingdom. He would not cast out his demons from people who were possessed. He would keep the people under his control. No, the only way to get rid of a demon is to come at it with a greater authority, a greater power. Jesus speaks of binding the strong man first if you are going to rob his home. If Jesus is going to take people out of the grip of Satan, he first must bind Satan. And the only one with authority to do that is God. The Pharisees could not accept that Jesus was the Son of God.

Then Jesus speaks about the unforgivable sin. Many people fear they have committed the unforgivable sin and that they can never receive God's mercy and enter his heaven. People have named adultery, or divorce, or addiction, or murder as the unpardonable sin. But Jesus makes it clear that all of those things are wrong. The unpardonable sin is attributing to Satan what God is doing. It is not recognizing the work of God. It is being hard hearted as the teachers of the law were, so that they could not see who Jesus was. To reject Jesus, that is the unpardonable sin. If we walk away from Jesus, we walk away from any chance of forgiveness and salvation.

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12

Reject Jesus, reject the work the Holy Spirit was doing in and through Him, reject the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to you, and you forfeit any chance of salvation. The Holy Spirit is the one who convicts us of our sin, and points us to Jesus as the only way to find forgiveness. If we shut ourselves up from hearing the Holy Spirit speak, like the teachers of the Law did in Jesus' day, there is no hope for us.

Now Jesus' mother and brothers arrived at the house where Jesus was teaching and ministering to the needs of the people. Verse 32 is a telling verse for it puts two groups of people in two very different positions in relation to Jesus.

There was the crowd sitting around Jesus. These were the ones eager to hear Jesus.

Then there was Jesus' family – they are on the outside.

Mark's language is very intentional: you can be close to Jesus or on the outside. It all depends on how you respond to Jesus' invitation to "Come, walk with me."

The crowds followed Jesus, at least to some extent. The family were there to lead Jesus away. They wanted him to go their way, while Jesus was inviting them to come his way. At this point they have little in common with Jesus. They do not understand his mission. They will not follow.

And so when the people point out that Jesus' family is outside, Jesus responds:

³³ "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked.

³⁴ Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother." (Mk 3:33-35)

Jesus was making it clear that he was forming a new kind of family. This one is not formed by blood lines and common ancestry. No, this new family was united together by one thing: faith in Jesus.

Jesus made it clear that it was not those who were curious or somewhat interested. It was those who obey Jesus, who are willing to go where he says to go, and do what he says to do. These are the ones who will form the new family of God. This new family would also be called the church.

Jesus was not turning his back on his family. No, Jesus believed very much in the importance of family. Family is God given. It goes back to creation, and is the foundation upon which all civilization must be built. Destroy the family, destroy a nation.

Jesus was not turning his family away, but inviting them to come walk with him. They could be a part of this new family too. We know Mary and James and Jude will accept the invitation to follow him, but for his brothers that would not happen until after the resurrection. But finally they understood, and they joined the family of God.

This morning we are all invited to join the family of God. I heard someone say recently that they have more in common with a Christian they meet for the first time than they do with a brother or sister who are not following Jesus. The bond which brings God's family together is our love for Jesus, and his love in us.

What a great family we become a part of when we say "yes" to Jesus. Everywhere you go, every city, every country you will find brothers and sisters who also love Jesus and walk in obedience to him. Those who have been in the church awhile know that you can feel closer to the church family than you do to your own family. But this should not surprise us, for this is what Jesus said would happen here in the passage before us today.

When we journey with Jesus, when we say yes to his invitation to "Come walk with ME" we will gain a new family. And as the chorus gladly proclaims: "I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God!"