

**Whoever does the will of God  
is my brother and sister.**

The Rev. Mark Wilkinson, Rector  
St. Aidan's Episcopal Church  
Virginia Beach VA 23452

[www.aidanvbva.net](http://www.aidanvbva.net)

June 10, 2018

Mark 3:20-35

Today's gospel causes some people confusion and leaves them wondering like Jesus' family, what is this man talking about? To approach a passage like this you must first understand a literary structure that was very common in those days. This is called a chiasmic structure. Today's is an A B C B A form. What may be easier to understand as to think of this as what theologians call the Markan sandwich. Two pieces of bread (the A section) about family, two pieces of meat (that's the B section) about blasphemy and demons. The sandwich is completed with a piece of cheese in the very middle (that's the C section) and that is the part about the house divided. The most important teaching here is the bread, the parts about family. The rest of the sandwich directly reflects on the bread.

Let us get the first stumbling block out of the way. That is the B section with the comment about blasphemy. This causes problems for some, but it is important to realize that this charge is leveled directly at the scribes. The Scribes are questioning the source of Jesus' ability to heal. Notice they do not dispute that the healings have taken place, but they are questioning the source. Jesus knows that the source of his healing ability is his relationship with God and that God is the source of the healings that Jesus has done. Questioning that is the blasphemy that Jesus is talking about. It is a specific charge leveled at the scribes from Jerusalem for their lack of belief in the power of the Spirit.

The other part of this that bothers people is that there is such a thing as a sin that is unforgivable. Several scholars noted that the scribes are seeing what is good as evil and so have cut themselves off from the Holy Spirit. That disconnect means they have put up a wall between God and themselves. As long as that wall stands they cannot be forgiven. That however means that if they turn and embrace God and the Holy Spirit they will be forgiven. Again the sin is separation from God

So now that we have that rather major stumbling block out of the way it is time to look at the bread, the outer sections that deal with family. The early followers of Jesus who made up Mark's community often had to deal with family issues because of their belief. The stress between the Jews who believed that Jesus is the Messiah and those who did not was definitely dividing families. Those who followed Jesus were taking a huge risk both from the Jewish authorities as well as the Romans. Remember the first time we encounter Saul who became Paul was at the stoning of Stephen.

Saul was on his way to arrest followers of Jesus when he had his conversion experience. The passage in Acts 9:1 says, "Meanwhile Saul still breathing threats and

murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.” So the threat to the safety of Mark’s disciples was very real and families were divided between those who accepted Jesus as the Messiah and those who did not.

This is important because as we read Mark we need to be aware of what the world was like for his followers. This colors how Mark tells the story of Jesus. So let’s look at the two pieces of bread in this sandwich.

“Then he went home; and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even hear. When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him for people were saying “He has gone out of his mind.” Notice that his home is now apparently in Capernaum not Nazareth. So his family from Nazareth has followed him to Capernaum. Jesus is again surrounded by a huge crowd, “so many that they could not hear.” I have in my mind the picture of a very chaotic scene. So you have a concerned biological family and a massive crowd.

Now we have the middle teachings and come back to the other piece of bread in the sandwich. “Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you. “ And he replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God, is my brother and sister and mother. “

Jesus steps out of the concept of family as biological and moves it to something entirely different. The definition of family now changes from biological to relational. Now the family in the early church is made up of those who follow the will of God, the teachings of Jesus. The root of this relationship is love, agape love, the love of God.

Iliia Delio a Franciscan theologian writes, “When love transforms our actions in a way that Christ is “represented”— then we become mothers, sisters and brothers of Christ. This birthing of Christ in the life of the believer . . . is a way of conceiving, birthing, and bringing Christ to the world in such a way that the Incarnation is renewed. It is making the gospel alive. <sup>1</sup>

This concept is in line with the video I showed two weeks ago about the Trinity icon with the mirror in it. If you remember we had the three figures of the Trinity and there was the spot in the middle of the table where there was a mirror that had been glued onto the icon. This meant that the person looking at the icon is invited to take their seat at the table, to step into the flow of love that defines the Trinity.

---

<sup>1</sup> Iliia Delio, *Franciscan Prayer* (Franciscan Media: 2004), 150-151.

This mirror puts us at the table and represents the second coming and surprise, surprise, we are the ones who represent the second coming, make real the second coming. We are the incarnation of Christ in our world today and that makes us brothers and sisters in Christ. We are not just the hands and feet of Christ, but we are part of that flow of love our world so desperately needs right now. We are the family of Christ.

At the offertory we are going to sing the song Weave. The theme for this entire service which was in large part planned by our youth all came from their decision to use this song. Here are the words: Weave, weave, weave us together, weave us together in unity and love. Weave, weave, weave us together. Weave us together, together in love.

We are many textures, we are many colors, each one different from the other, but we are entwined with one another in one great tapestry.

We are different instruments playing our own melodies, each one tuning to a different key. But we are all playing in harmony in one great symphony.

A moment ago, we did not know our unity, only diversity now the Christ in me greets the Christ in thee in one great family.

Now the youth have something interesting planned for the offertory, all I'm going to say is just go along with what they will ask you to do. There is a definite method to what they have planned.