

JESUS' TRUE FAMILY

Matthew 12:22-50

Key Verse: 12:50

“For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

The book of Genesis teaches us that God established the family in the Garden of Eden for his glory and man's happiness. When God reigns in a family there is love, order, meaning, and harmony. However, according to the Department of Vital Statistics, about half of all marriages in the U.S. end in divorce. The resulting emotional trauma has broken many young hearts to pieces—so much so that they have given up on finding happiness in the traditional family. What hope is there in such a world? There is hope in Jesus. Today Jesus teaches us about his true family. When we accept Jesus' teaching we can join Jesus' family.

First, the kingdom of God has come to you (22-37).

This part tells us about the Pharisees' blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. It begins with Jesus' mighty work in one person's life. Look at verses 22-23. “Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. All the people were astonished and said, ‘Could this be the Son of David?’” People were astonished. They thought that Jesus might be the Son of David, the promised Messiah. This lifted their spirits like nothing else could. They felt that the love of God would fill their nation, overpowering all the darkness of the times. Their hearts, which had felt dead, were warmed with a new hope and joy. They believed that the world would be a paradise. Maybe some wanted to compose a “New World Symphony” with a full orchestra to capture the mood of the times.

When the Pharisees heard this, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons” (24). The Pharisees deliberately called the work of God the work of demons. It was a desperate measure to protect their positions in society. Before Jesus came, the Pharisees had exercised great authority in Israel. No one dared to resist them. Then people saw in Jesus a true shepherd, who loved and served people with God's mind. They began to follow Jesus. The Pharisees felt they would lose synagogue members, authority over people, honor in society, and their jobs. For the sake of self-preservation, they spoke wickedly against the work of God.

Jesus knew their wicked thoughts. Jesus tried to straighten their crooked minds. Jesus reasoned with them to show that their position was untenable. First of all, no kingdom divided against itself can stand. This has been true for empires, cities and households. The greatest danger to America today is not from terrorists. It is from division within. We hear every day about traumatic events in dysfunctional families. No rational person would agree that a high divorce rate makes a nation stronger. This applies to the spiritual world. Jesus said, “If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand?” Moreover, if we deny objective reality, we lose the basis for rational existence. There were people among the Pharisees who performed exorcisms. If the Pharisees applied their logic consistently, they must admit that their own people were doing the work of demons. They were totally irrational. Denial of objective reality plunges a person or nation into chaos. St. Paul said in Romans 1:22, “Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools....” This is the condition of postmodern people today. A postmodern woman was marching in a pro-abortion rally. Someone asked her why she was doing this. She replied, “Because my mother never had the chance to do so.” How foolish!

Jesus really wanted the Pharisees to confront the truth, realize their foolishness and repent. Otherwise, they would be in grave trouble. Jesus concluded in verse 28, “But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” They had to think about the consequences of being wrong. If Jesus was driving out demons by the Spirit of God, the kingdom of God had come. Then they would not be opposing man, but God himself. They knew that they could not win against God. Ironically, what the Pharisees really needed was the kingdom of God. They wanted to be good people. At the same time, they wanted to hold on to their earthly kingdom forever. This is impossible. Only the kingdom of God can be our eternal home. Only the kingdom of God can be our true and living hope. Only those with hope in the kingdom of God can truly live a sacrificial life. We must accept the kingdom of God and loosen our grip on worldly hopes.

Jesus brings the kingdom of God because he is stronger than the devil and the power of sin and death. Look at verse 29. “Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the

strong man? Then he can rob his house.” The devil is very strong. He overpowered the first man, and plunged the whole human race into sin. He has wielded his power over the world. No one could defeat him. Then Jesus came. As we studied in Matthew 4, Jesus defeated all of the devil’s temptations with the word of God. After that, the devil ran from Jesus. Jesus is stronger than the devil.

Look at verse 30. Jesus said, “He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.” There are about 233 nations in the world. But there are only two kingdoms: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. There are more than 6 billion people in the world, but only two kinds of people: Jesus’ people and the devil’s people. Jesus’ people become shepherds for the world. They gather souls to Jesus for eternal life in his kingdom. Shepherd Len Austria has been working as a teacher at Boone Elementary School. Every Friday afternoon he invites 15-20 Boone students to our church and has Bible study and fellowship with them on a volunteer basis. Missionary Joseph Ahn just celebrated his 60th birthday. He accepted Jesus 42 years ago as a college student. Wherever he has been—in Korea, in Guatemala, in Mexico, in Spain, in New York, in Chicago—he has gathered people together and preached the gospel to them. Now he is gathering Northeastern students for Bible study. Since reorganization of Chicago UBF, God has raised eight new fellowship leaders: Paul Teodori, Robert McHugh, James Cook, Joseph Grady, Hosea Lee, Tony King, David Won, and Fernando Rayas. May Jesus give each of them his own heart to gather all the lost on each campus and bring them to Jesus.

On the other hand, the devil’s people become scatterers. They make the world chaotic and ungodly. The Pharisees scattered people with their careless blasphemy. Anyone who speaks ill of the Holy Spirit’s work to divide and scatter is doing the same thing. This is a very serious matter with serious consequences. Jesus said in verses 31-32. “...but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven...either in this age or in the age to come.”

The Pharisees were destined for eternal condemnation. How did they come to this point? In verses 33-35, Jesus explains that it was the fruit of their evil hearts. Genesis 6:5 tells us that the heart of a man without God is only evil all the time. The only remedy for an evil heart is the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works through the word of God. The Pharisees had studied the Bible a lot. They must have felt the Holy Spirit convict them of sin many times. But when they should have repented, they hardened their hearts and suppressed the truth. When they resisted the Holy Spirit they remained only evil all the time. Finally, they blasphemed the Holy Spirit. We must be quick to repent before the word of God so that we may obtain the Holy Spirit’s help. Otherwise, we can become dangerously hardhearted.

Look at verses 36-37. “But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.” How easily we speak a careless word! This includes the malicious word spoken from a hateful heart, the lewd word spoken from a lustful heart, the despising word spoken from an arrogant heart. These words can grieve God and wound others terribly. For those words, we will be condemned. On the other hand, by our words we will be acquitted. Romans 10:9 says, “That if you confess with your mouth ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” Jesus comes into our hearts when we confess him as Lord. Jesus changes us from evil people to good people. Jesus purifies us from all sin and enables us to speak words that build up others and bring glory to God. Let’s simply receive Jesus into our hearts as King so that the kingdom of God may dwell within us.

Second, the sign of Jesus’ resurrection (38-45).

Look at verse 38. “Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, ‘Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you.’” They were demanding proof of Jesus’ messiahship. Jesus had already given so many signs. When they asked for another sign, he was angry. But Jesus did not speak a careless word. Jesus rebuked them with very proper words, saying, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign!” (39a) After rebuking, Jesus told them of a sign.

Look at verses 39b-40. “But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” This sign refers to Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. According to God’s will and purpose, Jesus died on the cross for the sin of the world. Jesus was buried. On the third day, God raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus’ resurrection revealed God’s eternal victory over the power of sin and death (1 Cor 15:57). Jesus’ resurrection proved that he is

the Son of God (Ro 1:4). No one else has risen from the dead. Only Jesus rose from the dead to sit at the right hand of God. Only Jesus gives eternal life.

This great sign was given to the people of Jesus' time. Yet to accept it they needed to repent and believe. Otherwise, they would be condemned. Look at verse 41. "The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here." The men of Nineveh were known to be violent and immoral. They were an oppressive enemy of Israel. So Jonah really didn't like them. He did not want them to repent. He wanted God to punish them forever. Anyway, by God's help, Jonah preached repentance to the Ninevites. Then the whole nation repented. From the king, to the lowest slave, they put on sackcloth and repented. So God spared their city from destruction. Jesus recognized their good attitude toward the word of God, though their shepherd did not like them at all. The Queen of the South humbled herself and traveled a long distance to see Solomon to obtain divine wisdom. Jesus recognized her right attitude toward the wisdom of God. The men of Nineveh and the Queen of the South would rise at the judgment and rebuke Jesus' generation for being unrepentant.

Jesus' public ministry was a tremendous blessing to Israel. Demons were driven out and sicknesses were healed. Jesus wanted his generation to accept him as Savior and King. If they did not, their final condition would be terrible. Look at verses 43-45. "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation." We should not avoid repentance by demanding signs. We should accept Jesus' teaching as the word of God, repent, believe, and be saved.

Third, Jesus' true family members (46-50).

In this part we learn how to be Jesus' true family members. In the first place, we must be Jesus' disciples. Look at verse 46. Jesus' mother and brothers arrived and stood outside, wanting to speak to him in private. Mark 3:21 states that they thought Jesus was out of his mind. He was working too hard and making too many powerful enemies. Perhaps they wanted to take him away for a secret vacation or to a kind of clinic. Jesus replied, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" (48) Jesus raised an important question. Who are his true family members? Jesus was not doing this to avoid family responsibility. Once, Jesus had rebuked the Pharisees for claiming Corban to avoid family responsibility (Mk 7:11). Jesus cared for his family members, according to God's truth.

However, Jesus did not stop Bible teaching, or leave his disciples to attend to his mother and brothers. Pointing to his disciples, Jesus said, "Here are my mother and my brothers" (49). Jesus honored his disciples as his true family members. They were his spiritual family members. It is true that our human families are important, but according to Jesus, our spiritual family is more important. Jesus' disciples had made a strong commitment to Jesus, and Jesus honored it (Mt 10:37). Jesus recognized them as his true family members. Who are Jesus' true family members? Jesus' disciples are his true family members.

To follow Jesus, we must live as Jesus' spiritual family members. Sometimes we disappoint our human family members. It can be painful and costly. Many servants of God have disappointed their parents—even widowed mothers, and their children—even only sons. Behind the sacrificial and life-giving ministry of UBF, many tears have been shed by those who disappointed their family members. But we gain what is most precious: we gain membership in the family of Jesus Christ. Jesus becomes our true brother and Everlasting Father. Jesus is always with us to protect and bless us. We have the privilege of going to Jesus for grace to help us in our time of need. One couple was having marital trouble. They cried out in prayer. Jesus became their Wonderful Counselor. Their love relationship was restored and became stronger than ever. Now they are offering their family as a Jesus-centered house church. They are moving near the center. They are also expecting a third child. Thank God! What a friend we have in Jesus! In Jesus we have a wonderful family full of people who love one another deeply in Jesus. Missionary Little-Sarah Kim has worked and suffered much to establish many Jesus-centered house churches. Shepherd Jim and Jenny Cook have three precious children. During the construction of the UIC Bible house, this family of five opened their doors to UIC students for Bible study. In addition, they have welcomed UIC shepherds to share a common life with them, bearing the untidy habits that inevitably accompany most college students. One elder in our church has cared for several young men as though they were his own sons, buying new suits for their weddings. One woman

heard about a Christian sister's medical problem. She immediately made a plan to provide meals for her family. A medical missionary makes house calls for God's people, free of charge. What a privilege to be in Jesus' family.

We live in a time when many young people have not experienced a traditional family. They don't know what it is like to have real family relationships. They live in isolation with a deep sense of alienation. They may agonize with their peers, but peer influence cannot guide a young person to the path of life. Young people need shepherds. They also need Christian friends who can encourage them for spiritual good. Jesus is the answer. Jesus welcomes all young people into his spiritual family. Jesus provides everything we need to grow into godly and fruitful people. It is time to offer our house churches and fellowships as spiritual families for the young college students of our time.

In the second place, to be Jesus' family members, we must do the will of God. Look at verse 50. "For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." How can we do the will of God? We must first of all decide to do God's will, no matter what it may be. Jesus said in John 7:17, "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own." When we are ready to do it, no matter what it is, we can find God's will. Still, we must admit that we cannot obey the will of God naturally. To obey the will of God we must learn to pray like Jesus, "Not my will, but yours be done." Moreover, to obey the will of God we must study the Bible until we are transformed in our inner person. Romans 12:2 says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Doing the will of God is a personal matter. It is also a corporate matter. Some things are the will of God for all Christians at all times, regardless of who they are. It is the will of God to obey the world mission command (Mk 16:15). It is the will of God to love one another (Jn 13:34). It is the will of God to feed Jesus' sheep (Jn 21:15). It is the will of God to be sanctified (1Th 4:3). It is God's will to give thanks in all circumstances (1Th 5:18).

Today we learned that speaking against the Holy Spirit is a very serious matter. We also learned that Jesus invites us to be his spiritual family members. May God bless us all to be members of Jesus' true family when we do the will of God.