

HERE ARE MY MOTHER AND BROTHERS!

Mark 3:7-35 (Key verse 35)

"Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

There were always many people around Jesus. Jesus' fame was growing. Various groups and individuals came to Jesus to the point where it is difficult for Him to get around. In today's passage, different groups of people came to Jesus. They had all different backgrounds, different ages, different jobs, and came to Jesus with different needs and agendas. Yet Jesus divided them all into two groups only. They both came to Jesus and both knew Jesus to some extent, but only one group of people belongs to Jesus, regarded as Jesus' family.

How does Jesus divide people into these two groups? In verse 35, Jesus says "Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother." Anyone can come to Jesus freely, everyone is allowed to be with Him, but only those who do God's will would be part of this new family that Jesus has been building in the world. What about us? Where are we standing now? May the Lord bless you all through the words of God today!

In the previous passage, Jesus was seen teaching with authority, and demonstrating that authority by driving out evil spirits and healing many people. His words of love and power reached out to the paralyzed man, the hated tax collector Levi, a man with a shrivelled hand, and a large crowd. It shows Jesus is the promised Messiah, but at the same time, it provoked the Pharisees to the point where they began to plot how to kill (6). Despite their evil plan, Jesus continued His mission of preaching the good news of God's kingdom, teaching and healing people. And the crowds continued to come to Jesus from all over (7-8). They came to Jesus from everywhere. These people were gathering around, carrying sick people, and even trying to touch Jesus (10).

Jesus' ministry was a big hit. Mission accomplished? No! Gaining public attention is not what Jesus was striving for in this world. Jesus came down to this world to accomplish God's will, not the will or the demands of people. Public attention and large crowds have no guarantee that God is at work. Jesus had a hard time preaching because of crowds coming to Him desiring physical healing. He even had a boat standing ready to keep the people from crowding Him (9), yet still remained close enough to preach.

Jesus was probably faced with a dilemma: "Why did He come? Is His ministry primarily to attend to the present needs of people or to proclaim the gospel?" This is a dilemma of churches today too. Techniques used by many churches today are to get as many people as possible by any means necessary, especially by appealing to their desire for healing or excitement. They then take the opportunity to preach the gospel. Jesus could have done that. He could have used His healing power to get large crowds easily. He could have had the disciples gone throughout the towns, saying "Are you in trouble? Illness or financial difficulties? Come to tonight's meeting!" or they could have said "Come see the excitement! Be thrilled as Jesus will jump off a cliff! You've never seen anything like this! Come to tonight's meeting!" What an opportunity to preach the gospel with less efforts!

The world says, "The end justifies the means," and "The victor is always justified." As long as we Christians create opportunities to preach the gospel, can we do anything? No! Our works and services must focus on obeying and accomplishing God's will and for His honour and glory. Jesus healed many people, but He never used healing to attract crowds. Jesus'

healing the sick and driving out demons is an expression of God's love and compassion and an illustration of the truth He was proclaiming. Jesus didn't come to this world to just make people happy. He came to this world to accomplish God's will by His death and resurrection in order to save people, so they would be happy in eternity.

Jesus never wanted God's works hindered by chasing after people's demands. Jesus wanted to accomplish God's will on earth, but He knew it's not possible to do with crowds coming. Jesus loved them. He welcomed them whenever they came for help, but Jesus had to build a new assembly among crowds for God's will to be accomplished even after He ascended into heaven. So Jesus calls the first disciples. Let's look at verses 13-15.

13 Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. 14 He appointed twelve--designating them apostles--that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach 15 and to have authority to drive out demons.

Jesus rejected the idea of trying to draw large crowds. He withdrew to a mountainside and selected a small number of men for a special purpose. Jesus spent considerable energy on these men who would be part of His intimate family. The twelve represent the new beginning with the new assembly that Jesus was building. Jesus decided to focus on these disciples who would eventually spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. Even if they were only twelve men, God would work through them and a new history would begin from them who were willing to offer their lives to accomplish God's will.

In fact, the twelve apostles represent every Christian who are willing to do God's will, who belongs to Jesus as His family. As Jesus sent the twelve apostles to preach and drive out demons with authority, Jesus calls and appoints His disciples today to send out to preach and help God's flock. We don't need to worry about whether we are qualified for this calling. To be Jesus' disciples has nothing to do with one's qualification or capability. Look at verses 16-18.

16 These are the twelve he appointed: 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

A new history has begun with these disciples, might be less recognized, less educated, less capable than the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, but they accepted God's will upon Jesus' calling. They might be the least among the Israelites, but they were willing to follow Jesus to accomplish God's will. God could use them greatly in His work, not because of their human conditions but because of their faith and decision. In the same way, God wants you to be also part of this assembly no matter how you might think of yourself. God calls the disciples today who chooses to do God's will regardless of their human conditions and surrounding circumstances. This is the way to be part of the family of Jesus who will bring us all to God's eternal kingdom in the end.

Unfortunately not everyone accepted Jesus' invitation to join this precious family. The crowds came to Jesus for healing, amazed at Jesus' power. They didn't look like to reject Jesus, but they had no interest in the truth or in obeying God's will. They misunderstood the purpose for which Jesus came. All they wanted was healing. They missed the point. In the end, they turned their hearts away from Jesus the Christ, seeing Him died on the

cross. They came to Jesus with eagerness, but they couldn't be part of the family. Even one of the twelve apostles, Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus (19). He was with Jesus for years, but he failed to find God in Jesus. Some wonder why Jesus chose Judas to be His disciples. I don't know, but I have an even harder question: "Why did Jesus choose me?" Why did God choose me even though He knew very well that I will betray His love and commit sins again? I want to know why, more than I want to know why Jesus chose Judas. Jesus chose you, not because He is certain that you won't betray Him, but because He wants you to grasp the opportunity to know and accept Jesus as Christ, so you become one of His family member in eternity.

Another rejection comes from of course the teachers of the law who are mostly the Pharisees. Look at verse 22.

22 And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons."

They come down from Jerusalem to investigate Jesus. They saw Jesus healed many and drive out demons, but all they said was Jesus was possessed by the prince of demons because He drove out demons so well. If a policeman catches criminal so well, then he becomes a criminal too (or the prince of criminals)? How can the one who is destroying the demons, freeing people from their slavery, be on the side of the demons? By driving out demons and freeing people from their slavery, Jesus was actually plundering Satan's property (23-27). Jesus first overcame Satan's temptation in the desert for forty days (1:13). It foreshadows what Jesus would do to completely destroy Satan with his bullies by His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead.

What Jesus was doing is setting people free, healing and rescuing people from their physical and spiritual bondage, restoring people's relationship with God. Depending on whether we will accept or refuse Jesus and His works, Jesus will bring us the forgiveness or wrath of God. Let's look at verses 28-30.

28 I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. 29 But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin." 30 He said this because they were saying, "He has an evil spirit."

The Pharisees thought they were right with God for two reasons. First, as descendants of Abraham, they were God's people by natural inheritance. Second, they were obedient to all external regulations. But Jesus warned them that their sins would not be forgiven because they said "Jesus has an evil spirit". They were saying the work of God as evil and belonging to Satan. They refuse to recognize Jesus' authority, power, and rule. In such a condition, one will never repent because every piece of evidence further blinds one from seeing the truth. If you believe that your surgeon is a murderer, you will never submit to an operation by him. In the same way, if you see Jesus as from Satan, then you will never submit to His will. Jesus says that all sins and their blasphemies will be forgiven. The only way that cannot happen is by denying who Jesus is.

The real tragedy is that Jesus own family who were close to Him for at least 30 years did not know He is the Lord. Look at verses 20-21.

20 Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. 21 When his family heard

about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

Jesus own family concluded that Jesus is out of His mind. Most people will tolerate a little religion, but as soon as your religious convictions start to be the dominant drive in your life, people get uncomfortable. They say, "Don't allow your faith to determine how you will live." But Christianity is not a habit, trend or lifestyle. Christianity is a life, a new life in Christ. If you believe in God, you have only one life. Because it's your one life in God, your faith must determine how you will live, all decision you will make with regards to your study, job, marriage, and so on. If people think you are out of your mind in your pursuit of God, you should take it as a compliment.

It's all about a distance, the distance between us and Jesus Christ. People come to Jesus, but they set a distance or limit. They don't go beyond this distance or don't allow Jesus to come within their boundary. They know Jesus, but they don't know and obey God's will, they don't know who Jesus truly is. In verses 31-35, this distance is well illustrated by the author Mark. Let's read verses 31-35.

31 Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you." 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."

Here Jesus' mother and brothers were standing outside. They thought they knew of Jesus, but they failed to recognize who Jesus truly was. In the past, they were with Jesus in the same house. Where were they now? They were standing outside. It illustrates the distance between them and Jesus. Who were with Jesus right now? Jesus looked at those seated in a circle around Him and said, "Who are my mother and my brothers? Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

Jesus' mother and brothers were physically within Jesus' boundary, spent 30 years living with Jesus in the same house. They could come to Jesus at any time more conveniently than any other people because of their human relationship, but as the Bible says they were standing outside, building the wall before Jesus. What about the Pharisees? They could recognize Jesus more quickly than any other people because of their privilege of being chosen by God and their extensive knowledge of the word of God. But where were they now?

Who will be more blessed: Jesus' mother and brothers, who just knew Jesus or those seated around Jesus, who were trying to learn from Jesus? Who will be more blessed: the Pharisees, God's chosen servants, studied God's words with their lives entirely dedicated, or the disciples, less educated, but accepted God's will upon Jesus' calling?

Where are you right now? Are you standing outside or seated around Jesus? Are you just following Jesus from a distance or willing to obey God's will with Jesus? Forget it about yourself with something you may have said or done in the past. Simply ask yourself "Where am I standing right now with regards to Jesus?" Not in the past, right now where we are standing now? If you know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, your Lord and your Saviour, why do you still follow Jesus from a distance? If you know that Jesus will come again as God, why do you hesitate to do God's will? Physically, emotionally and spiritually, let's come closer to Jesus, and be part of God's intimate family for all eternity.