

Who Is My Mother?

Matthew 12:46-50

(Holding book – picture on screen) “Are you my mother?” was one of my favorite children’s books. It tells the story of a young mother bird whose baby is about to hatch. She goes in search of food to feed her baby, but while she is away, the egg hatches. The baby bird then goes on a long journey in search of his mother. (Tie to children’s moment)(Video clip) “Are You My Mother?”

I remember reading it with my mother, and reading it over and over on my own. Mothers are important in our lives. They are those special people whose love brings us comfort and whose wisdom guides us through life. I am mindful that many have not had that experience or may have lost a mother; or even a child. So let’s consider the “Snort” in the story. The Snort was helpful to the baby bird. It safely cared for the bird while returning it to its nest. I have had “Snorts” in my life and I’m sure many of you have too. Those are the women who have been encouraging, caring, helping, loving. Some were mothers of their own children....some didn’t have children of their own. These are the many “moms” I’ve had – teacher moms, church moms, band moms, neighborhood moms, friends of the family moms. These are the Snorts in our lives. These are our mothers.

(Video)

Thank you to the mothers and the “snorts” in our lives.

Today we begin a new series on Questions Jesus Asked. During his ministry, he asked many questions. These questions often challenged the culture, challenged the beliefs, and challenged the hearers to grow in their understanding of God the Father. So it is fitting that today on Mother’s Day, the question is “Who is?” As we heard in the scripture reading, Jesus’ full question is “Who is my mother? And who are my brothers?”

If we focus on the verses that were read, it sounds like Jesus was ignoring his mother. How many of you would have gotten in deep trouble for ignoring your mother? But that is basically what Jesus did! On first reading of this scripture one might think Jesus is being disrespectful to his mother and his family. We need to take a closer look at this scripture.

Earlier in Chapter 12, Jesus and his disciples ate the grain in the field on the Sabbath and he healed the man’s withered hand on the Sabbath. The religious leaders were condemning him for breaking the law of the Sabbath. They told him that his healing was of Satan and not of God. He calls the Pharisees a “brood of vipers!” He also gives a prediction of his resurrection by comparing Jonah’s 3 days and nights in the belly of the fish to the 3 days and nights the Son of Man will spend in the heart of the earth.

It was during all of this that his family appears. And Jesus asks “Who is my mother?” I think most of us know that his mother is Mary. Then he asks, “Who are my brothers?” There is little to no information about Jesus’ childhood and family. So there are several interpretations about who the “brothers” might be. In some translations the word “brethren” is used which has become the leading interpretation. “Brethren” could be cousins – Mary’s sister’s children. Whoever the “brothers” are, the family shows up and tries to interrupt Jesus’ teaching.

Anybody here ever been interrupted? Think about a time when someone you love interrupted you? Maybe you were watching your favorite TV show. Or maybe you were working from home and the kids come in and want to play. Or perhaps the phone rings, and it’s Mom, just as you’re getting ready to sit down for dinner. How do you feel? Do you stop everything and give your loved one your undivided attention? Be honest!

One thing that is important for us to understand is that the family was not in support of Jesus’ ministry. In Mark 3:21, which parallels this chapter of Matthew, it says that “when his family heard it, they went out to get control of him and they were saying ‘he has gone out of his mind.’” So this is why they were there. They were on the “outside” coming to take Jesus away from his work. If they were supporting him in his ministry, wouldn’t they be on the “inside?”

So now, we have a clearer understanding of why Jesus didn't respond to his family. His mission was too important to be interrupted; to be pulled away. The message that he was teaching was more important than the interruption. Instead he poses this question: "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" Surprisingly, he has not forgotten his family, as the question might suggest. He asks this question to teach a very important lesson.

Jesus answers his own question: "Here are my mothers and my brothers. Whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven is my brother, sister, and mother." You are my brothers, my sisters, and my mothers. My "snorts!"

I can't tell you how many times Pastor Dave, Marilyn, or I have heard what a blessing the church family has been in the lives of members of our congregation. "I don't know what we would have done without our church family." "We have been so blessed by this church family." "I love our church family."

I have experienced this personally. The past 5 years have proven to be by far the most difficult in my life. In 2010, I lost my father. It was unexpected. I hadn't been here that long and was a very private person. I thought I couldn't share my pain and grief. But this church family held me up and helped me through my grief. Then there was the next 4 years of caring for my mother. Mom was a double amputee with dementia. It was a very difficult time. But I had so many people come up

alongside me on that journey. They offered me love, a listening ear, strength, prayer, and presence. I know that I could not have gotten through some of those days without them. It is my second Mother's Day since Mom passed. No one can ever take her place. But I understand what Jesus wanted us to know. I couldn't get through it without you. Who is my mother? Who are my brothers and sisters? All of you! We are a family. Jesus wanted us to know that we are all part of God's family. And notice there is no reference to fathers? That is because we all have one Father....our Heavenly Father. In the Old Testament culture, family relationships were defined by a hierarchy – wives and children were expected to obey the father of the house. Well, it is the Father of this house that binds us as family. And we are expected to obey Him!

This is the message Jesus was teaching.

But for many people, family is not a comforting image. They have not had the experience of a loving family. So it is difficult for them to understand Jesus' references to the Family of God. Jesus wants us to be the "ideal" family. If we follow and obey our Heavenly Father, we will create a loving family.

In a study conducted by Focus on the Family, 500 counselors were asked what were the traits of successful families:

1. Communicating and listening

2. Affirming and supporting family members
3. Respecting one another
4. Developing a sense of trust
5. Sharing time and responsibility
6. Knowing right from wrong
7. Having rituals and traditions
8. Sharing a religious core
9. Respecting privacy

We are the Family of God! But you can't expect to experience this family if you are only here on Sunday mornings. It is through the development of relationships that we are able to come together as one. I encourage you, if you are not in a small group or involved in ministry beyond Sunday morning, you are missing out!

Jesus said they will know that we are his "family" by our love. Let us live in love with one another so that others will want what we've got. Edmund Clowney said "Christians in community must again show the world, not merely family values, but the bond of the love of Christ."

"There should be such a love within the church that the lost world is tripping over themselves to come and experience it." (Troy Harkey)

We need to dig deep to know our Father's heart. So that we can follow His plan, His will, and share His love with each other and the world. When we know Him like that we will have joy unspeakable, faith unsinkable, love unstoppable and anything is possible!