



# HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Family is Everything

May 14, 2023

Mark 3:31-35

Clint Pressley

*<sup>31</sup> And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. <sup>32</sup> And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." <sup>33</sup> And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" <sup>34</sup> And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! <sup>35</sup> For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."*

*(Pastor prays)*

Family is everything. You don't even have to be a Christian believe that family is everything. But family can be tricky sometimes. On the one hand, sometimes you have a family that provides the greatest security and greatest affection and greatest support. On the other hand, you can be in a family that brings the worst heartache and anxiety. That's the dichotomy of families, often most intense around Mother's Day. It's a great day to set aside to rightly honor a mother you love and respect and want to emulate. Maybe you're that mother.

For other people in this congregation, Mother's Day carries a dull heaviness of unrealized dreams and unreached potential, and even unmitigated tragedy. If indeed family is everything, when the family is fractured or bruised or even torn apart, what do you do then? How do you keep your bearings on Mother's Day? How do you stay solid? How do you fight off those encroaching clouds

of depression? You know, it's providential that we are at this passage on Mother's Day. That was not planned. You read from verse 31 to verse 35 and five times in quick succession you have the word "mother." Nowhere else in the Bible does that happen. And here in this passage, the word of God is showing us that there is a family that is greater than **the** family.

Let's go to the context of what's in the scripture. Here is one of the most painful and delicate situations of Jesus' earthly ministry. Where is He? In Chapter 3, Jesus is in Capernaum. He is in a crowded house. It is probably Peter's house. Inside the house, people have come to hear Him teach and preach. If you reach back to verse 21, it tells us that Jesus' family has shown up. His mom and His brothers have come to perform an intervention.

If you ever have a family member go off the rails and you gather together the rest of the family, and you go to confront, that's what they're doing in verse 21. His mother Mary, His brothers—Jesus has at least four brothers: James and Joseph and Simon and Judas. He has sisters. We don't know their names. The family have come to Capernaum to intervene because they think He has lost His mind. We don't know where His daddy is, His adopted father Joseph. We hadn't seen him since the time Jesus was 12 in the temple. Verse 21 tells us His family thinks He is insane, that He's lost, that He's out of His mind is the way it is put. His mother does not yet believe that He is fully the Messiah. She will. We find her in the church in Jerusalem. His brothers do not yet believe, but they will. We find them writing two books in the New Testament.

This passage is remarkable because it's shocking the thing that Jesus says to His family. This passage shows us that Jesus cannot be untrue to His mission and He will not be unkind to His mother. But He must establish a brand-new order, a new relationship, a new family that's not dependent on biology. It's not dependent on sociology. This family is not dependent on family dynamics, but it is dependent on the binding power of the Holy Spirit of God through faith in Christ. That's why there's such great hope in this passage, especially on Mother's Day. There is hope for every fractured family member, every broken dream, every childless woman, every guilty man, every person who

has contributed in some way to the dysfunction in a family, maybe your family. You can find hope here. There's hope here because the Lord Jesus stands with open arms to welcome you into His family.

### When you are in Christ, You are part of God's family.

If that's the case, then let's go and see what God's family looks like. The question becomes: what does God's family look like? I'll give you a couple of things to consider as we go through the passage. Here's the first one, number one.

#### **God's family is a Gospel family**

God's family is a Gospel family. I'm going to explain that a little further. God's family is not natural, it's supernatural. When you read verses 31 and 32, you get the scene and recognize some presumption. Join me there in verse 31.

*<sup>31</sup> And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him.*

So your mom is outside. You're inside with a crowd of people teaching. The crowd is sitting around Him, and the word is passed from the outside into the inside. The word passed is "Hey, your mom's out there." There's some presumption. Here is Jesus with His earthly family whom He obviously loves. When Jesus is hanging on the cross in John Chapter 19, He talks to John and says, "John, take care of this woman. This is your mother." Jesus obviously loves His family. There is such a close earthly bond that comes with a mother and a father with a child, a brother and a sister. There is something there. So there's a natural assumption that if His mom has shown up, and His brothers are out there, that although the house is crowded with people inside with Jesus, there is a natural assumption that He's going to make provision. I mean your family gets a free pass. Mom's outside. The word's been passed that your mothers is out there. Isn't He going to respond? Everybody in here would respond. All of us would. Oh, mom's out there.

In our Christmas Eve service that happens here at Hickory Grove, there are lots of people who come and pack the place. I will find a seat for my mother. I'm standing here preaching right now. I've got a phone in my pocket. If it rings and it's Connie, I am probably gonna step away from the pulpit and answer. Your family has a special dispensation. You treat them like you wouldn't treat anybody else. That doesn't happen here. It's not what you would expect. What we're starting to see in this passage is that there is a family that is even greater. Yes, we agree the nuclear family—when I say nuclear family, I mean a mother and a father and children living in one home. The nuclear family is a gift of God. It is a gift of common grace. We thank God. But you don't have to be a Christian to love your nuclear family. You don't have to be a Christian, you just need to be a person. Sometimes we've failed because we've made that the ultimate. But it's not the ultimate. Here Jesus is establishing a new order. A different kind of family. It's good for us to remember about His mother, His biological mother Mary. It's good for us to remember that Mary herself will have to repent of her sin and put her faith in Jesus. She is like the rest of humanity. In order for Mary to become a part of this family, she's gonna have to believe in Jesus. She'll have to embrace the Gospel.

What do we mean when we say the Gospel? The Gospel is the doorway into the family of God. What is the Gospel? The Bible teaches that God is a holy God who created all of us in His image. As humans, we have dignity because He created you. You have dignity because you are made in the image of God. You can lift your head up because you're made in the image of God. But the image of God in us has been disfigured by our own sin. That sin is so heinous. It is a crime against God that deserves punishment. And that sin has separated us from God so that God is not our father, He is our creator. However, His son Jesus comes to take the punishment we deserve. Our elder brother stands in the way. He takes the punishment. And then gives us His righteousness so that you can become a part of the family of God by putting your faith in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Because of that we are

adopted in. That's the only way into the family of God. It is a Gospel family. Let me show you something else you'll find in the passage. #2.

### God's family is an exclusive family

Join me there in verses 31 and 32. There's a very clear symbolism. I just will take a glance at this. We won't spend much time here, but just take a glance at the symbolism in this passage. Jesus is on the inside. His family members are on the outside. <sup>31</sup>*And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him.* Get the visual marks here. They're standing outside. They sent to Him and called Him, and a crowd was sitting around Him and they said to Him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside." Jesus is on the inside with His disciples. The 12 and others have gathered around and are crammed into the house. And down to verse 34, Jesus is gonna make the radical claim: This is my family now. And the straightforward symbolism in verses 31 and 32, the straightforward symbolism is Jesus on the inside, and the people on the inside are His family.

There are several things to think about now: the difference between being on the inside and being on the outside. Number one. There is no physical family connection necessary to be in the family of God. You don't grow up to be in this family. The children will be dedicated today. We actually are dedicating their parents. And their parents are saying "we're going to raise our child to the best of our ability to the fear and admonition of the Lord." But that child, one day when she is old enough to understand right from wrong and hears the Gospel, she will be responsible. There are no grandchildren in the family of God. This family is joined by faith in Jesus. Look, there's no prerequisite. There's no prior knowledge necessary. People on the inside in this passage with Jesus, some of them were terrible people, and immediately they were saved. You may have come up in a family that is not a believing family. It's not a Christian family. God brought you to a church. You gave your life to Jesus Christ and you all of a sudden have brothers and sisters who are close to you. It's the family of God. You are part of the family of God. There's something else here. Look at it there. It is a clear distinction. Some people are on the

outside, and some people are on the inside; some are out of the family of God, some are in the family of God. We feel that most here at Hickory Grove when we practice The Lord's Supper. When we practice The Lord's Supper, we ask all of those who have never put their faith in Jesus and followed through with baptism not to take The Lord's Supper because it is a *family* meal and it paints the picture in a tangible way. There are some on the inside and some on the outside.

We live in a world where the language can be confusing. Our language about God and who all is a child of God is sometimes confusing. We sometimes will think of our common bond with other people, that we are all God's children, all humans. This is a common bond with humanity. And there is a common bond. That common bond is that we are sinners under condemnation. What makes us God's children is when we turn from our sin and put our faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Then God becomes a father, not a judge. Now He becomes a father and He adopts you into His family. I mean even Jesus' own biological brothers are considered outsiders compared to the people on the inside of this house with Jesus. And the glorious truth is that Jesus makes provision for you to be inside.

You know the prologue of John. You read the Gospel of John. If you've never read a gospel in the New Testament, start with John. It's poetic and the language is beautiful and descriptive. And there is some description of Jesus' family not receiving Him and how those who are not even part of his family can come in. John says it like this in John 1:10-13. John writes, <sup>10</sup> *He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.* <sup>11</sup> *He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.* <sup>12</sup> *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,* <sup>13</sup> *who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.* Brothers and sisters, when you are in Christ, you are part of God's family. God's family is a Gospel family. God's family is an exclusive family and maybe a third way to think of it is. #3

**God's family is a diverse family.**

When you read verses 31-34, you get the picture of all who is crammed into that house. <sup>31</sup> *And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him.* <sup>32</sup> *And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you."* <sup>33</sup> *And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?"* <sup>34</sup> *And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!"*

I mean, I just read it to you. Think of all of those sitting inside that house with Him. We don't know who all was there. We do know who started following Him, all of them crammed in there were listening to Jesus and believing in Jesus. There are a couple of things we do know. We know there are 12 disciples. We know that several of them are fishermen. One is a zealot, a radical. One was a tax collector. You have people in that house who used to be so crazy they were possessed by demons. Jesus cast those out. Somebody who was paralyzed was healed. There were people who had terrible diseases that you wouldn't normally be around. They're all in this house. All kinds of people from all walks of life are blended into one family by the love of Christ. You understand that, because of Christ, we look at things radically differently; radically differently than we did before. Years ago, if you wanted to grow a church, there was a principle. There was an erroneous trend, a wrong trend in church life to build churches with the principle of homogeneity. "Homo" which means "same," and "genetic" is "likeness." The principle was to build churches by doing things where people felt like "this is my people." So you would have activities and ministries so that like-minded people could feel comfortable with other people who are just like them in the congregation. So you might have something like a biker church. Or still today, there's cowboy church (which I might like to visit sometime). Cowboy church or traditional church or contemporary church or modern church or young church, a white church or a black church, so that what you have is this shared commonality that keeps all of us together in this one homogeneous section. But if you have a shared commonality that holds you together, you don't actually need Christ. Anybody can do that.

That's not what we have in the family of God. It's so frustrating when I hear people say, "I just don't see anyone my age there." Or it doesn't really suit. You understand we're not building a family to suit; so that you feel comfortable and part of the family. That's the whole power of the Gospel that brings you into something you would otherwise not feel a part of. It's the power of the Gospel. What we have in common is the Gospel. In God's family, our shared commonality is not some homogeneous thing that holds us together. Our shared commonality is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And that love is stronger than any bond there is. I don't know who said it. I don't think I invented it. I wish I did. I know that "blood is thicker than water." But *Christ's* blood is thicker than *blood*.

In the eastern part of the continent of Africa is a country named Burundi. It is mostly agriculture, not much by way of suburbs. A little boy was born there and they named him Olivier. Surname Hakizimana. Olivier came up in Burundi, east Africa. It was a place that was indigenous with tribesmen, then was overtaken by the Germans and then the Belgians came in. So by virtue of where he grew up, Olivier speaks probably five languages. He likes to sing. Olivier, he's not here today. He just finished his doctorate and graduated in Louisville. He's a black man. He is remarkably different from me. I grew up in East Charlotte off Albemarle Rd. We moved to Mint Hill. I like to play football. I like to read about history. I like cars. He plays the guitar. Me and Olivier have nothing in common. But I have a stronger bond and more in common with Olivier than I do with an unsaved white guy who likes cars and reads history. That's because of Christ. You see, there is no family like the family of God. God's family is a Gospel family. God's family is an exclusive family. God's family is a diverse family. I'll give you a fourth one to consider, #4.

**God's family is a respectful family.**

I had to work hard on this point. You have to slow down and very clearly and methodically notice the wording in verses 33-35. There is an insertion of a category. <sup>33</sup> *And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?"* <sup>34</sup> *And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here*



*are my mother and my brothers! <sup>35</sup> For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”*

Look at the change. There's 35 for whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and my sister and my mother. It's interesting that Jesus in verse 35 would insert the word "sister." It's not balanced. It has been "mother and brother" and now "sister." We know that Jesus loved and respected His mother. We know that many women were a part of those that followed Him and were His disciples. We know that women were the very last at the cross and they were the very first at the tomb on Easter Sunday. We know that Jesus' mother was part of the early church in Jerusalem. We read that in Acts 1. We know that women helped finance His ministry. But it's interesting to me that Jesus adds the word "sister," as if to make us a little bit imbalanced. It's a reminder. The apostle Paul picks up on this principle when He further defines how Christian men and women treat each other in the context of the family of God, the church. How do we act as this new family? Paul writes in 1 Timothy 5:1-2, *5 Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, <sup>2</sup> older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.* He says, use your manners here. You have here the rules for the family of God. It's how we treat each other. This family of God is a family of respect and devotion that's built on love for one another bound by the Holy Spirit. We are living our lives to the glory of God, our father. See when you're in Christ, you are part of God's family. It's a Gospel family. It's an exclusive family. It's a diverse family. Look at all the people sitting around here. It's a respectful family. Let me give you something else to consider before we go. I'll make it my last point. #5.

**God's family is an obvious family.**

It is obvious who's in the family and who is not in the family. As if this encounter is not radical enough, make sure you see the whole paradigm shift in verse 35. It is indeed a paradigm shift that the importance of family doesn't go away but Jesus says there's another family above their biological family. There's a shift. There will always be evidence. Evidence that you actually are a

part of God's family in Christ. To get the whole thing, we need to start in verse 33 and we'll land hard on verse 35. <sup>33</sup> *And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?"* <sup>34</sup> *And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!"* <sup>35</sup> *For whoever does - here is the evidence - the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."*

But what is the sign that you, in fact, are a part of this family? This is in no way Jesus saying you can earn it, if you will live good, you can be in the family. He's saying, if you are in the family, this is how you'll live. There is actual evidence. Look, it's becoming increasingly clear, in the world that we live in, that we will have less and less commonality with people who might like the things that we do. They might enjoy the sports that we enjoy but we're gonna have less and less commonality there because the world has absolutely gone so insane. It's becoming increasingly clear that you and I are going to have to rely on the family that God has given us in Christ. Those with commonalities like us, who enjoy the things we do, they are now our mission field so that we might speak of the joy of actually being in the family of God in Christ. But in order for that message to be true, there has to be evidence. Jesus says in verse 35 this is how you know that people are in the family: they do the will of God. That's my mother and sister. It's a beautiful thing. It's a beautiful thing to be a part of the family of God in Christ. I pray you will turn, receive the joy, seek Christ with His arms open, waiting to welcome you home to His family. I want you to be part of the family of God by putting your faith in Jesus.

*(Pastor prays)*