

Who is My Mother?

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Preacher: Stewart Gill

[0 : 00] This is the AM service on June the 29th, 1997. The preacher is Stuart Gill.

The sermon is entitled, Who is my mother? Preaching from Matthew chapter 12, verses 43 to 50. Let us pray. Loving Heavenly Father, we thank you that we can gather in your presence this morning and around your word.

We give you thanks for your Bible, and we do pray that you might be present through your Holy Spirit and open our hearts and minds. That we might know that we have met with you as you have met with us through your word, and that we might go from this place transformed to serve you this week in the world.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. I don't know if any of you are gardeners. I'm not much of a gardener myself, but my wife likes to spend time in the garden.

[1 : 10] And I'm usually called in when there's heavy work to be done. When you have to get the spade out to dig a plot. To plant veggies or to plant flowers or what have you.

I sometimes find, though, that when I clear a space in the garden to plant some vegetables, that it's some time before we actually plant anything. And soon the weeds begin to encroach.

And before you know it, the whole thing is covered over again in weeds. The easiest way to conquer the weeds is to fill up the garden with good things.

To fill up with Brussels sprouts. Some of the children might not like Brussels sprouts. I know my children don't. With lettuce, with tomatoes. Tomatoes.

With all the things that we enjoy. With useful things. So that the garden can be fruitful. I think the first part of the story that we see here this morning in Matthew chapter 12 from verses 43 to 45 is something like this.

[2 : 23] The story of a man who has an evil spirit. And that evil spirit is exorcised in some way. Perhaps Jesus is speaking here of some of the Jewish exorcists who were around at the time who would drive out spirits.

But who didn't necessarily believe in the kingdom of God. So the spirit was driven out. But nothing took the place of the spirit.

And we read here that the person cleans up their life. And to all outward appearances they have perhaps a clean and orderly life.

They don't actively seem to be wicked. To be seeking to do wicked things. The moral reformation has taken place in the person's life.

And they seek to live a good life. To be a good person. To do no harm to anyone. The evil spirit then we read having been exorcised.

[3 : 28] And having sought rest in desert places. And finding none. Returns to its original dwelling place.

And he finds it swept clean. And decides to bring along some of his mates. He brings along seven other spirits. To join him and to dwell there.

And the person's final state. According to Jesus. Is pronounced worse than his first. Jesus then applies this story.

To this evil generation. And in verse 45. He says. So will it be also.

With this evil generation. His teaching is to warn the audience that he's addressing. But I think it's also a warning to us.

[4 : 30] To his later readers of the scripture. Who would read Christ's words. And it's warning us against complacency. If we go back a little bit.

In chapter 12 of Matthew. Back to verse 22. We read. Of how Jesus was involved. In driving out an evil spirit.

Then they brought to him. A demoniac. Who was blind and mute. And he cured him. So that the one who had been mute. Could speak and see.

And all the crowds were amazed. And said. Can this be the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it. They said. It is only by Beazabub.

The ruler of the demons. That this fellow casts out. The demons. The Pharisees said. That he wasn't doing this in the name of God.

[5 : 27] But he was doing it in the name. Of the prince of demons. And Jesus replies to them. And he says. In verse 27. If I cast out demons.

By Beazabub. By whom do your own exorcists. Cast them out. Therefore. They will be your judges. But if it is by the spirit of God. That I cast out demons.

Then the kingdom of God. Has come to you. The kingdom of God. Has come upon the person. When Jesus Christ does the work.

Then the kingdom of God. Fills that space. The Holy Spirit. Comes upon the person. And dwells within the person. And is fruitful. So that there is no room left.

For the evil spirits. Not only moral reformation. Takes place. But spiritual regeneration. The effect on the person.

[6 : 27] Is dramatic. Not just harmlessness. But holiness. Becomes the characteristic. Of such a person. Let's not confuse harmlessness.

With holiness. How many people do we hear say. I'm as good as you are. I never cause harm. To anyone. That's not quite the same.

As saying. I'm being holy. I'm being effective. In my life. For Christ. I'm being Christ. Like. In the way.

That I operate. In the way that I treat people. Let's just look briefly. At 1 Peter. Chapter 1. Verses 13.

To 16. Where I think we. See something. Of the kind of holy. Lives. That we're supposed to live. The way that we are supposed to be filled. By Christ.

[7 : 26] In Christ. In Christ. In Christ. In Christ. In Christ. In Christ. In Christ. In Christ. In Christ. 1 Peter. Verse 13. Therefore. Prepare your minds. For action. Discipline yourselves.

Set all your hope. On the grace. That Jesus Christ. Will bring you. When he is revealed. Like obedient. Children. Do not be conformed.

To the desires. That you formerly. Had. In ignorance. Instead. As he who called you. Is holy. Be holy yourselves.

In all your conduct. For it is written. You shall be holy. For I am holy. Why is it so important.

That we be holy. Is it important. So that we can answer. The critics. Of Christians. So that we can answer. Our critics. Is it important.

[8 : 21] That we be holy. So that we can perhaps. Become more credible. In the world. So that we can perhaps. Evangelize. More effectively.

I don't think. Any of these reasons. Are right. These are rather. The results. Of what happens. When you begin.

To take holiness. Seriously. But they are not. The reasons. Is why we should place. Such a high value. On holiness. There is only one reason.

Why we should prize holiness. And that is because. Jesus Christ himself. Is holy. The head of the church. Is holy. And if we are Christians.

Then surely. We identify. With him. We are at one. With our Lord. Look at Ephesians. Chapter 5. Verse 23.

[9 : 16] We read that Christ. Is the head of the church. His body. That Jesus Christ. Is the Lord of the church. And that he is a holy Lord. And as members of his body.

He constrains. And commands. Both you and me. To be a holy people. We are members. One of another. We are united to the head.

And the head. The head. Is holy. So we have to take holiness. Seriously. In obedience. To our Lord Jesus Christ. The head.

Whom we love. We have to honor. Our head. Whom we worship. As we gather together today. To worship. The Lord Jesus Christ. Surely.

We want to be faithful. To the Lord Jesus Christ. We want to be faithful. To his direction. We want to be a holy people. How does this holiness.

[10:15] Express itself. Paul's definition. At the beginning of his letters. To the churches. I think are quite instructive. First of all.

Paul speaks of us. As saints. In Ephesians chapter 1. Verse 1. If we just go back a few verses. From the chapter. That was read to us.

Ephesians chapter 1. Verse 1. We are described as saints. We are described. As a separated people. And here. I think Paul. Was taking up. All the significance.

From the Old Testament. Of the meaning of holiness. Of being cut off. Of being separated. We are separated. From the world. As God's new society.

We are also those. Who. Again. According to Paul. In 1 Corinthians. Chapter 1. Verse 1. Call upon the name. Of the Lord Jesus.

[11:12] We are a worshipping community. As we come together. And I believe. That the worship. Of the people. Of the people. Of God. Is a mark of holiness.

Thirdly. Returning to Ephesians 1. Verse 1. We are a believing. Or a faithful. People. We are brought together.

By common adherence. To a body of truth. We are brought together. By the Bible. And we are united together. By the scriptures. So we are separated.

We are worshipping. We are believing. These are marks. Of holiness. For holiness. Francis Schaeffer. Expresses the same truth.

In a different form. He says. Holiness expresses itself. In truth. And love. A holiness. Of truth. And a holiness.

[12:07] He says. Of life. And he asks. In one of his books. The church. Before the watching world. He says. We must ask. Do I fight merely.

For doctrinal faithfulness. Do I fight merely. For doctrinal faithfulness. Like the Pharisees. This he says. Is like the wife.

Who never sleeps. With anyone else. But never shows love. To her own husband. Is that. He asks. A sufficient relationship. In a marriage.

No. He answers. Ten thousand times no. Yet. If I am a Christian. Who speaks. And acts. For doctrinal faithfulness. But doesn't show love.

To my divine bridegroom. I am in the same place. As such a wife. What God wants from us. Is not only doctrinal faithfulness.

[13:04] But our love. Day by day. And this is something. That isn't merely a theory. But it's love.

In practice. Are our lives. Filled. With Jesus Christ. How do you respond. To Jesus Christ. Neutrality.

Towards Jesus. Especially on the part. Of those. Who have received. Most benefit. From Jesus. Is extremely dangerous. We can often have the appearance.

Of being good. We can be harmless. To our fellows. I've never done harm. To anyone. Some people say. We may even be church goers.

Even perhaps. Leaders in the church. Like the Pharisees. Of Jesus' day. We may even. Have experienced.

[13:58] Reformation. In our own lives. That we're doing nothing. Spiritual regeneration. Hasn't taken place. Are we growing.

In our Christian lives. Are we being a blessing. To others. Have we really come to Christ. And can we show. The fruits.

Of being a Christian. How do we fill our lives. Do we believe. That we've cleaned out. Our gardens. If so. Has anything been planted there.

That will bear fruit. Jesus. Has the power. To banish evil. From our lives. But also. To fill them. With the presence.

Of the Holy Spirit. The warning. Here. Is a serious warning. If we reject. The Son of God. We have a bleak future.

[14:54] Jesus. Jesus goes on. However. In this. Passage. In chapter 12. Of Matthew. And.

He goes on. To speak. Of his relationship. With his mother. And his brothers. His relationship. With his disciples. And I believe. His relationship. With you and I.

While he was still. Speaking. To the crowds. His mother. And his brothers. Were standing outside. Wanting to speak to him. Someone told him. Look. Your mother.

And your brothers. Are standing outside. Wanting to speak to you. But to the one. Who had told him this. Jesus replied. Who is my mother?

Who are my brothers? And pointing to his disciples. He said. Here are my mother. And my brothers. For whoever does the will.

[15 : 50] Of my father in heaven. Is my brother. And sister. And mother. Jesus is warning. That we've just been speaking off.

I think is illustrated. By an example. Of complacency. In which Jesus is mother. And brothers. Presumed on their family relationship.

To gain access. To Jesus. The story seems to presuppose. That Jesus. Had gone into a house. Because we read. In chapter 13. Verse 1.

That that same day. Jesus went out of the house. And sat beside the sea. And the picture would seem to be. That Jesus is in the house. Teaching his disciples. And others.

There's a large crowd in the house. There's a large crowd. Perhaps around the house. And it's difficult. For his mother and brothers. To get access. To Jesus.

[16 : 44] And they pass on a message. We're outside. We'd like to see you. We'd like to talk to you. What might we expect from Jesus? That he would run outside.

And greet them. And hug them. Well. That's not quite what happens here. Is it? He sends out a message. And says. That.

His mothers and brothers. Are those who are closest to him. His disciples. Was he being rude? Had he no concern.

For his family? Does this shock us today? I think it would have certainly shocked the people in the first century. Who put such. So much into their families.

And their families were so important. To them. Jesus. Identifying with his disciples. As his mother. And brothers.

[17 : 43] As the closest to him. Rather than his blood. Relations. His mother and brothers. Who were standing outside. His next statement. Goes on to.

To broaden this. Whoever does the will of my father in heaven. Is my brother. And sister. And mother. Whoever does the will. Of the father.

Is the person who knows. Jesus Christ. Who acknowledges him. As savior and lord. What was Jesus saying here? One of my aunts.

Used to say jokingly. You can choose your friends. You can choose your friends. But you can't choose your relatives. Unfortunately. You're stuck with me. It's been the experience.

I guess. Of many. That when they. Became a follower. Of Jesus Christ. That their closest relatives. Don't understand them. And are even hostile.

[18 : 44] To them. And I think Jesus. Experienced this. In John chapter 7. Verse 5. We read. For even his own brothers. Didn't believe in him.

Now it's not that Jesus' mother. And brothers. Have the same spirit. As the Pharisees. They weren't hostile. Towards Jesus. But they didn't understand.

Jesus. And more likely. They were concerned. For his well-being. And what would be the possible consequences. Of his ministry.

So they interrupt him. In the midst of his ministry. Trying to speak to him. While he was engaged. In God's work. I remember. As a youngster.

Being at my aunt's. One night. When the budgie died. And I was sent. With another relative. To a soccer game. To inform my uncle. That the budgie had died.

[19 : 43] The soccer stadium. Was just. Across the road. Well. The game was going on. At the time. It was still. The first half.

Midst of the first half. And the gatekeeper. Wouldn't let us in. We had to. Wait at the gate. While a message. Was sent to my uncle. That the budgie had died. Well.

You might guess. The end of the story. The soccer. Was more important. To my uncle. Than the fact. That the budgie had died. And we were sent away. Until he could return.

At the end of the. The match. Looking back. On this incident. It's rather. Absurd. But as a six-year-old. I didn't understand. I didn't understand. That a soccer match.

Was much more important. Than a dead budgie. I think here. Jesus's family. Didn't understand. The importance. Of the work.

[20 : 38] That Jesus was engaged in. That he was engaged. In God's work. And God's work. Came first. Perhaps. Perhaps they were doing this.

Out of the best of intentions. They were trying to protect. Jesus. And I can assure you. That if my sons. Were here this morning. My five-year-old.

My three-year-old. And this place. Went up in flames. I wouldn't try to save. Any of you people. Out there. My first thought. Would be. For my sons.

I'd be trying to protect them. I'd be trying to save them. And I think that's how we think. Humanly. But how does God think?

Remember John 3.16. For God. So loved the world. That he gave his one and only son. That whoever believes in him. Shall not perish.

[21 : 35] But have eternal life. That God gave up his son. To die upon the cross. For you and I. That's the way God thinks.

Quite different from the way. We think. God was prepared. To give up. His son. For you and I. One of the martyrs. In the early church. Wrote that. A Christian's only relatives. Are the saints. And it's been the experience of many.

That when they become Christians. They're alienated. From their relatives. For instance. When the Quaker. Edward Burrell. Became a Christian. His parents.

Resented. What they saw. As a fanatical spirit. And drove him from his home. He pleaded to remain. To become a servant. In his father's household.

[22 : 31] But his father. Showed him the door. Have any of you. Ever. Experienced that. I know my own parents. Were non-Christians. And when. I became.

A Christian. They couldn't understand. What had happened. And there was opposition. To the things. That I wanted to get involved in. Jesus here.

Points to spiritual ties. As being more important. Than family ties. It was possible. To be related. To the Messiah. And yet. Not to be part.

Of the kingdom. Who do we. Most closely. Identify. With. Today. Do we. Identify. Most closely. With our. Relations. Who are perhaps. Outside of Christ. Or those. Who are within the kingdom. Fellow Christians. Isn't friendship.

[23 : 27] Founded upon. Having common ideals. And. As I look around. This morning. We all come from. Different backgrounds. We come from. Different countries. We've had.

Different experiences. We have different jobs. Yet. If we're in Christ. We have a common ideal. For which we work.

And towards which we press. Isn't friendship. Also founded upon. Common. Experience. And memories. Which flow from.

That experience. When we've passed through. The same experience. Then we have something. To share. Why do so many.

Gather together. On Anzac Day. Because they have a common. Experience. To share. Surely. If we're Christians. If we've been saved. By Christ.

[24 : 21] Through faith. By grace. Then we have a common. We have a common experience. We have a common experience. To share. With one another. And love and friendship.

Is also based. On obedience. If we look at verse 50. For whoever does the will. Of my father in heaven. Is my brother. And sister. And mother.

There's no way. Of showing the reality. Of love. The reality. Of what God has done. For us. Through Jesus Christ. Except being obedient. To that same father.

Who has poured out his love. For us. In Jesus Christ. Christ. My own. Personal experience. Since becoming a Christian.

Has been. That I've found. The closest. Fellowship. With those. Who share. My Christ. Centered ideals. Those.

[25 : 19] Who know. Jesus Christ. Those. Who have. Kingdom values. Those. Who are seeking. To do. God's will. Are you. A relative. Of Jesus Christ.

Christ. In the terms. Of Matthew 12. Verses 48. To 50. Well. I think. These passages. Teach us.

That it's possible. To be religious. Like the Pharisees. And still not be part. Of the kingdom of God. It's also possible. To be related.

To Christ. And still not be part. Of the kingdom of God. Religious practices. And religious pedigree. As we heard from Paul.

A few weeks ago. When he was preaching. On Philippians 3. Isn't enough. To bring us. Into the kingdom. We need to know. Who Jesus Christ is.

[26 : 14] And make a conscious decision. To follow him. I'm reminded of a story. About a swagman. The stories. Of a swagman. In the western district.

Who knocked on a farmer's door. And politely inquired. For some work. As a handyman. The farmer. Cautiously put the man. To work. On a trial basis.

First of all. By splitting. Some rope logs. For firewood. The stranger. Finished the work. In record time. The next task. Was to plow.

The fields. Which was done. In just a few hours. The farmer. Was astonished. He thought he had found. A modern day. Hercules.

The third task. Was less laborious. He took the hired man. To the barn. And he pointed. To a large pile. Of potatoes. And instructed him.

[27 : 13] To sort them. Into two piles. Those that were. Of prime quality. And those that were. Of inferior grade. The farmer. Was curious. When this miracle worker.

Didn't arrive back. Within a few hours. And he went to the barn. To investigate. And there. Was still. The large pile. Of potatoes.

There was no. Perceptible change. In the pile. In one bin. There were three potatoes. In the other. There were two. What had happened?

What's wrong? Demanded. The farmer. Why are you moving. So slowly? And a look. Of defeat. Was written. All over the man's face.

As he threw up his hands. And replied. It's the decisions. In life. That are so difficult. There needs.

[28 : 09] To be an acknowledgement. Of who. Jesus Christ is. And a determined. Decision. To follow him. A decision. A decision.

That brings you. Into an intimate. Relationship. With Jesus. That's closer. Than a brother. Or sister. Or mother. Or father. That decision.

And the ensuing. Discipleship. Is nothing less. Than the will. Of the heavenly father. Do you know. Jesus Christ. Is your life.

This morning. Full. Of Jesus. Are you doing his will. There's a remarkable contrast. Between verses 45.

And 50. In 45. We read. Then it goes. And brings along. Seven other spirits. More evil. Than itself. And they enter.

[29 : 06] And live there. And the last state. Of that person. Is worse. Than the first. So. Will it be. Also. With this evil.

Generation. In verse 50. For whoever. Does the will. Of my father. In heaven. Is my brother. And sister. And mother.

Without Christ. In verse 45. Our future. Is bleak. In verse 50. Those who commit themselves. Wholeheartedly. To Christ. Have a sure future. Of eternal fellowship. With the father. Through the son. Is your life.

Empty. Or full. This morning. Amen.? Yes. The Lord.

[30 : 05] Without a drink. It's the Lord. Thanks.