

Family Matters

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Preacher: Jared Blankenship

[0 : 0 0] He introduced this story of Jesus's family back in verses 20 and 21, and we were told there that as they had heard what was going on in the Lord's ministry, the things about the dangerous crowds that were pressing against him, the murderous plots of the Pharisees and the scribes, and then even the physical depletion that he was dealing with. He couldn't even eat a meal in some circumstances because of the crowd and the busyness of the ministry that they became concerned, and so they set out for Capernaum, and we were told in verse 21 that the purpose of going to Capernaum was that they might seize him. They may stop him from what he was doing. Now Mark paused momentarily as we studied last week to record for us an exchange between Jesus and a group of scribes that had come to Capernaum from Jerusalem specifically to examine Jesus and to give the Jerusalem's position officially to the people that were following Jesus, and then he returns to this issue of Jesus's family here in verse 31. Now if this was a screenplay, at this point we would feel the tension building in the story. We've first been introduced to Mary and the brothers, as we'll get to here in just a moment, and they are concerned, and we see all of the problems that are facing Jesus at all in this moment, and the tension is building, and now we're just wondering what's going to happen when they actually get to Capernaum. What are they actually going to do? How are they actually going to go about stopping him and hindering him? And I imagine that what actually ended up taking place once they got there, as we just read, came as quite a shock to not only Jesus's family, but also to the people that were gathered with him here in the house in Capernaum. Now this is a genuinely shocking story as we go through it, and we see the statements particularly that Jesus is making, but the shock of it is somewhat lost, or at least easily lost, in our culture today, isn't it? We don't quite view the family the way that the family would have been imbued in Jesus's day. In fact, the biblical view of the family has been devalued to the extent that some groups would even claim that it's offensive or even dangerous, the what we would call the nuclear family or the biblical family, that it's even a dangerous thing to propose or to enforce in our society. The most prevalent worldview of our day champions the individual above everything else, right? There may be some secularists that would come to this passage, and they might even applaud Jesus for these statements here, not because they believe him to be on a divine mission as the son of God, but because they would think that he is, that every person, every individual is free to do whatever they want without the oppressive restraint of family expectations. That's the culture in which we live now, isn't it? At least in Western society, that's where we live. The self is the thing that's most important. What I want for me and what I want to do for me is what's most important, and it doesn't matter any other structures that are in my life.

I am the priority, what would be. And so some of the shock of this might would be lost a little bit on our culture, but that's why it would be helpful for us, I think, here at the beginning to just do kind of a bird's eye view of what the Bible says about the family. And that'll help us understand a little bit more of not only what Jesus is saying in this passage, but also what he isn't saying in this passage as well. So let's do that. If you want to keep notes of this, this is just kind of a marginal thing. I'm just going to note these things, and then we're going to move on from it, okay?

Well, just a few things about the family. One, the family is a part of the creative order. It's a part of the creative order. If you go back to Genesis chapter 1 and 2, and you read about God's creation, and you read about what his purpose was in that, you'll find that he instituted the family at the very beginning of human existence. You'll remember he first created Adam, and then he created Eve, his wife, as to be a helper that is suitable for him, as the language reads there.

And then he instructed them to have children, to work, and to populate the earth. Now, all of this was done in the creation account before Adam and Eve sinned. God sees the family as a primary way that we reflect his own glory. And I'll just read to you, Genesis 1, 27. So God created man in his

own image.

In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them. And God blessed them. And he said, be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves on the earth. So the family is a part of the creative order. Second thing is this. God's desire for honor within the family is codified in the Old Testament. He gave us all kinds of laws, or he gave his people all kinds of laws in the Old Testament about the way that the family is to function, and how they are to reflect his glory. So that the view that we carry for the family, and for those within our family, is actually an issue of morality. We know that primarily because of in his big 10, the 10 commandments in Exodus 20, he gives two specific commandments that relate directly to the family. The first one's in verse 12, he says that we are to honor our father and our mothers. And then in verse 14, just two verses later, he says, thou shalt not commit adultery. Laws that specifically related to life within the home, life within the family. So God not only created the family, but then he made it a moral issue that if we don't view it, and if we don't function within it the way that he has determined, then we actually are living in sin. There's plenty of references for that in the Old Testament, but we'll leave it there for now. The third thing is this, God designed the home to be the headquarters for Christian discipleship. God's truth was transmitted through the home for thousands of years before he ever gave us his written word. Have you ever considered that? God specifically charged his people in Deuteronomy chapter six to keep his word and his laws the priority of the home. Let me just read it to you. Deuteronomy chapter six. These words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand. They shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorpost of your house and on your gates. That's a pretty strong command. It's an explicit command that we have a responsibility in our families to actually perpetuate truth. And of course, thankfully, the Lord has given us his written word. And of course, we rely on that. That's the truth that we're now transmitting. We keep the word of God, the focus of our homes. That's what God intended the family to be, a place of discipleship. And then we see that in the New Testament, there is all kinds of instruction about God's desire for the family. Jesus and the apostles all told extensively about the home and what life was to be like in the home. They provided instruction about marriage, instruction about divorce. They provided instruction about parenting, widowhood, obedience to our parents, sexual fidelity, and much more than that.

[8 : 37] You read through the New Testament, you'll see this over and over and over. Let me just give you one example in Colossians 3 verses 18 to 21. Paul just kind of summarizes, he gets everybody in these three verses. Wives, submit to your husbands as it is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything for this pleases the Lord.

Fathers, don't provoke your children lest they become discouraged. The Bible is just full of instruction. It's full of God's desire for the home and for the family. It's over and over and over, and it goes all the way back to the very first chapter of scripture. That God cares about the family and he cares how we view the family and he cares how we function as families. But despite all of that, listen, the family is still not the highest relationship in our lives. It's not how God intended it to be. With all the instruction he gives, all the stuff about marriage, all the stuff about parenting, it is still not the primary relationship in our lives. God's purpose in designing the family as he has done is not about social order. It's about pointing us to a greater relationship with him and an eternal spiritual family of believers. As much as we love our families, they're temporal, not eternal, but they serve a purpose to point us toward a more extraordinary, lasting relationship that we can have with God and other believers. And our earthly families are to serve that function. You say, well, what in the world does this have to do with Mark chapter three?

Well, it helps us to understand the point that Jesus is making. And it helps us to understand the point that Jesus isn't making. Jesus isn't cutting off his family in this passage. That's not what's happening here. He's teaching an essential truth about the gospel. He's giving the priority of relationship that as important as the family is, there is still greater a relationship and purpose that we have in relationship with God. And the Bible constantly holds these two things in tension. It holds in tension, the physical and the spiritual realities of life. And that's exactly what Jesus is doing here in this passage.

And so let's get into it and see what it has to teach us this morning. If you're keeping notes, write this down maybe first. His family on the outside. His family on the outside. Look with me at verse 31.

[11 : 44] And his mother and his brothers came and 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 seeking you. Now, we already know that some of Jesus's family was traveling to Capernaum. But verse 31 is where we find out exactly who is in the group. Mark says that it's Mary, Jesus's mother, and then some of Jesus's brothers as well, which we find listed in other passages in the New Testament. Now, for why they were traveling to Capernaum, we have to go back to verse 21, which tells us that some of them thought that Jesus had lost his mind and they intended to seize him. Now, remember that word is more than just stopping. It's more than just making a statement. They were physically going to restrain him. That was their desire to physically restrain him, to stop him from what he was doing. And they believed themselves to be on this sort of rescue mission. It wasn't that they were antagonistic against Jesus. They loved him. This was actually, they were being compelled out of their love for him. They thought he was in danger. They thought this was a problem. They thought he had lost his mind. They felt like they needed to rescue him. And so they headed to Capernaum to do what they thought was right. Now, Mary's involvement in this whole scenario is not very clear in the passage.

But one thing we do know, no one understood Jesus's nature and purpose better than Mary. You can look back at Luke chapter one and Luke chapter two at the birth narrative of Jesus.

And we see that this angel comes and actually reveals to Mary what was going to take place with this child. Of course, she didn't know the fullness of what it was, but she knew. And if you get into the end of chapter one, you see what we call Mary's Magnificat. You see very clearly, she understood there was something very significant. This child was from God.

This child was God. And this child had a specific purpose in the redemption plan. Okay, she understood that. Nobody understood that better than Mary. And over and over in the childhood passages of Jesus, we see her pondering these things in her heart and holding them in her heart and considering what was going on. So what she was doing in this particular passage, we're not exactly sure. It's possible that she was accompanying the group to make sure that Jesus's brothers didn't do anything foolish.

Perhaps that's what she was doing. It's also possible that as a loving mother, she had also grown very concerned for her son and was perhaps involved in some way about stopping him at least momentarily.

[14 : 39] Either way, something significant about Mary's presence is necessary for us to understand. Her presence reminds us that even Mary had to come to the same point of faith in Jesus as every other person. She had to. At some point, Mary was going to have to stop seeing Jesus as her son and start following him as her Lord and Savior. And when that moment took place, we don't know for sure. But what we do know is that faith was just as necessary for her salvation as it is for you and me. And that's important. Well, when the family arrived at the house, they stood outside, we're told, and they called for Jesus to come out. And they must have been persistent in doing this because everybody around Jesus became aware. In fact, somebody actually ended up interrupting Jesus because he was obviously ignoring what was going on. Somebody interrupted Jesus just to make sure he could hear that his family was outside calling to him. And perhaps they were sending messages in that were being passed along to Jesus. There was an expectation, not only on their part, but also on the part of the crowd, that he would stop everything he was doing in order to answer their call. And of course, everyone would have been surprised at the way that Jesus responded. And we start to see something emerge here now in Mark's gospel. It's a pattern. It's a pattern of making a distinction between insiders and outsiders. Those on the inside being those who have come into a spiritual relationship with

Jesus Christ. And then those on the outside who may have had a close physical relationship, but did not know him as Lord. Mark's beginning to have a pattern of showing this. Who's on the outside?

Well, surprisingly, it's Jesus's family, his mother and his brothers, and maybe his sisters as the way that he responded. They're on the outside. Well, who's on the inside? Well, it wasn't the crowd that he was referencing. Matthew tells us that he gestures over to his disciples as the insiders. Jesus was drawing a distinction. Mark was showing a pattern of noting this distinction through his book.

Now, universalists will say that we are all the children of God. Therefore, every person is an insider. Many religions will say that true insiders demonstrate the greatest sense of piety and commitment to their religious observance. Some live as if their lineage or their nationality is what gives them status that they need with God. But Jesus, in his pattern, said that all three of those perspectives were actually what made them outsiders. And as we noted last week, closeness to Jesus is no substitute for following him as Savior and Lord. When it comes to your relationship to the family of God, are you an insider or an outsider? And if you believe yourself to be an insider, what is it that makes you think that's true? Jesus proves that neither family ties nor religious zeal can make us right with

God. Before we move on, we need to consider why Mark is presenting Jesus's family as outsiders. And the answer to that lies within the reason that they came to Capernaum. Though they may have been very well intentioned, his family's attempt to stop him was actually quite wicked. We might even say that it was satanic. Their love for him compelled them to be concerned for his physical well-being. But their unbelief actually stood in the way of his purpose in the Father's will. Nothing is more evil than standing in the way or opposing the will of God. Jesus made this clear in an interaction with Peter. We'll get to it eventually in Mark chapter 8. You'll remember that Jesus, after Peter had just made this great confession that you are the Christ, Jesus says that's true. And he begins to tell them about his crucifixion and resurrection.

[19 : 27] He said that he had to go to Jerusalem and there he had to suffer and he had to be put to death. But then three days later, he would raise from the dead. And then the passage says that Peter pulls him to the side. Now picture this. This is the Lord and he has just made a statement. And now one of his followers takes the mastery of him in a sense and pulls him over to the side and it says that Peter rebuked him. And what was it that Jesus did? Jesus turns his back to Peter and he looks at the rest of the disciples and he says, get behind me. What? Satan. It was Peter, Satan? No. But what he was doing in that moment, his mindset in that moment was a satanic mindset as it was with Jesus's family. They were well-intentioned just as Peter was. He didn't want his Savior to die. He didn't want his Lord to die.

Neither did Mary and Jesus's brothers want something bad to happen. What they failed to notice because of their unbelief is that Jesus was on a divine mission from the father and what they were doing was standing in the way of their own redemption. And Jesus had to confront it. To avert him from his mission is fundamentally satanic by Christ's own testimony. And our point of application there is to realize that sometimes our family can actually be the most significant hindrance to us knowing and following Christ. Sometimes the pressure of an unbelieving family or family member can prevent us from actually following the Lord in faith. It's also true that family can become an idol that stands in the way of faithfulness to God's purpose and will. While our families are of great importance, they cannot have priority over the will of God. Jesus said as much in Matthew chapter 10.

He said that he did not come to bring peace but a sword. What he was talking about is this division that would inevitably come in some families. And he says the truth of the gospel is that anyone who loves mother and father more than me is not worthy of me. And anyone who loves son and daughter more than me Jesus said is not worthy of me. And sometimes our family can actually be the thing that keeps us away from the Lord. So we see his family on the outside. Then we see his family on the inside.

His family on the inside. Look with me at verse 33. And he answered them, who are my mother and my brothers? And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, here are my mother and my brothers. Now his response here is emphatic.

Did you notice there's an exclamation point at the end of this sentence? Here are my mother and my brothers. That's actually quite uncommon in the scriptures to be punctuated in that way. For a sentence to be punctuated in that way. And it was emphatic what he was saying.

[22 : 46] There was force behind this communication that Jesus was speaking. Now had they utilized tape recorders in those days, this would have been an interesting conversation to hear.

Is it that Jesus is just passionately teaching a point in this moment? Or is he making sure that his family can hear what he says? Because they're on the outside. Here is my mother and my brothers. What? Can you imagine how crushing that must have been to Mary and to his brothers?

Here they were coming to help him. They loved him. They cared about him. And they try to get him to come outside so they can help him. And he says, here is my mother and my brothers. Perhaps

Mary's mind immediately goes back to all those childhood things. The angel. The birth in Bethlehem. The sojourning in Egypt. The time watching him learn the trade of Joseph as a builder, as a carpenter, a stone mason, whatever it was that he would have been doing in those times. Maybe she thought back to the time when he was 12 and they went to Jerusalem and Jesus stayed around. It says she pondered those things in her heart after that scenario was over. All these things flood her mind. And then just the crushing nature of hear him seemingly sever his ties with her. The same perhaps could be said of his brothers.

And we need to understand here what Jesus was saying and what he wasn't saying. It was a provocative statement, but he did not intend any measure of disrespect or spite.

[24 : 43] Jesus actually loved his family. Even at the point of death on the cross, we see him showing great care and concern for his mother. You remember in John chapter 19, Jesus is about to die. He's on the cross and he sees Mary and John, one of his disciples. And he says, Mary, behold your son. And then he looks at John and he says, he says, John, behold your mother. He went, that was an act of care. That was concern. He loved his family. He loved his brothers. That's, that's not what he's saying here.

Neither would Jesus have violated the scriptures. He wasn't dishonoring them. That wasn't what was taking place. He even taught about the necessity of honoring parents when he confronted the Pharisees in Mark chapter seven. Jesus was using this interruption to teach a significant truth about the gospel.

He wasn't severing his ties with his family. He was making the point that the only relationship to him that is significant in eternity is spiritual, not physical.

This would have come as a challenge to his family and to his followers. If Jesus's mother and brothers were not saved because of their relationship to him, what did that mean for everybody else?

Jesus wasn't being disrespectful. He was actually stating an essential truth that salvation only comes through faith in him. It does not come through relationship to him physically.

[26 : 32] It does not come through our families. Salvation does not come through an affiliation. Salvation comes by faith, by grace alone.

Sinclair Ferguson said, Jesus was essentially asking, is your relationship to me natural or spiritual? Does it depend merely on the quote accident of birth and upbringing or on your knowledge of who I am and your personal commitment to me? How would you answer that question?

Do you claim Christianity because you happen to be born into a Christian environment? Or is it because you genuinely believe in Jesus and commit your life to him?

Are you a Christian because your parents are Christians? Are you a Christian because you're an American and that's just what historically we've mostly been? Are you a Christian because you happen to be brought up in a Christian environment?

Are you actually a Christian because you genuinely believe and follow Jesus? That's essentially the question. None of those other things matter, Jesus says. What matters is your spiritual relationship to me.

[27 : 53] Is your relationship to me natural, merely through upbringing and through affiliation, or is it actually spiritual? You've actually come to faith in me. You are actually genuinely following me as Lord.

And the answer to that question will actually determine whether or not you're on the inside or on the outside. So we see his family on the outside.

We see his family on the inside. And then thirdly, we see how we can move from the outside to the inside. Moving from the outside to the inside. Look at verse 35. For whosoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.

Whosoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother. And this final verse brings a lot of clarity to the circumstance, doesn't it?

Everybody there would have understood now, okay, this is a lesson that he's teaching. He's not severing ties. Mary and his brothers would have had to recognize once he made this statement, okay, what's he saying?

[29 : 04] This was a challenge. This was about how you move from the outside to the inside. Clearly, he wasn't abandoning his family.

He wasn't showing anger at them. In fact, a similar statement to this is made by Jesus in Luke 11. In fact, if you want to write that reference down, you can look at it later.

Luke 11, 27 and 28. It's not the same circumstance, but it is a similar statement. Here's what it says. What is Jesus saying?

Blessed rather, rather being an important word in this sentence. Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it.

What is Jesus saying? More blessed than Mary, my mother, is the person who will believe me and follow me and obey the word of God.

[30 : 13] The true family of Jesus consists of the people who do the will of God. And they do that by obeying the word of God. But what exactly did Jesus mean by that?

I mean, surely he wasn't descending into this works-based system that he's been preaching against up to this point, right? Because it kind of sounds like we got to go to the Bible and we got to see all the things we're supposed to do.

And then once we do those things, then we get accepted into Christ's family. But that's not what he's saying at all. Of course, that's not what he's saying. Otherwise, there would have been no point for him to come and die.

He was referring to the message he had been preaching since chapter one, which is this. The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe the gospel. Repent and believe the gospel. What's the will of the Father? Repent and believe the gospel.

[31 : 13] What's the gospel? The gospel is that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God and the Messiah. That his death took your place. That his death pays for your sin.

And that if you will come to faith in him, he will give you life. Jesus said it more directly in John chapter six.

He said, for this is the will of the Father. That everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life. Well, what's the will of the Father? What's the will of God?

That we look on the Son and believe. What did Jesus say? Repent and believe. You want to move from the outside to the inside? It's not about joining a church. It's not about going to a certain amount of worship services or masses.

It's not about giving a certain contribution to the work. It's not about getting your life cleaned up and getting rid of the drug addictions and the alcohol addictions and the pornography addictions and the cheating on your spouse. It's not about stopping telling the lies.

[32 : 13] It's not about getting rid of all the things that you're doing wrong. It's not about anything that you do. It's about seeing who Christ is and trusting him as Savior and following him as Lord.

That's the will of the Father. That's how you move from the outside to the inside. It didn't matter that they were his family. It ultimately didn't matter.

What mattered is would Mary follow him as Lord? Would James follow him as Lord? Would Jude follow him as Lord?

And the rest of the crowd was the same thing. It doesn't matter to me how enthusiastic you are about my ministry. My question is, do you believe me? And will you follow me as Lord?

You can't become an insider through religious commitment. You won't be given eternal life for being either an Israelite or an American.

[33 : 12] And just because you've taken the label of Christianity doesn't actually make you a Christian. James Edwards said, anyone, anyone can be an insider who sits at Jesus' feet and does the will of his Father.

And no one can be an insider who does not. Anyone can be an insider who sits at the feet of Jesus and does the will of his Father.

And no one can be an insider who does not. But Jesus' statement wasn't just a correction about confusion and salvation. It's actually an encouragement here for all who are prepared to follow him. Those who do the will of God, he says, are my brother and my sister and my mother.

And if we are his brothers and sisters, then we are heirs with him. Heirs of what? Eternal life. Titus chapter 3.

[34 : 25] But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us. Not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy.

By the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior. So that being justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

How awesome is that? Join heirs with Jesus as we quoted last week that hymn. As we travel this sod. That's what we are. There's an encouragement here.

And what is it? This inheritance include. It's not just eternal life. We actually gain a family that's eternal as well.

You say, I don't really have much of a family. You went through all that stuff at the beginning about what the family's supposed to be. I don't really have a family. What does that mean for me? You may not have a father now.

[35 : 41] But in Christ, you gain a heavenly father. Not just for now. Forever. You say, I don't have any siblings.

There's this wondrous thing that happens in salvation when God brings us into his church. And what do we gain in the church? Lots of brothers.

Lots of sisters. Lots of crazy uncles. Right, Marty? You say, I don't have any children. You can have mine.

You know what my kids need? They need to be disciplined by their church. You say, if I follow Christ, I'm going to lose everything.

My family won't want anything to do with me anymore. But what you gain is so much greater. That's hard to hear. It's easy to say. It's hard to hear. But Jesus said as much.

[36 : 41] Mark chapter 10. Jesus said, Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the gospel who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time.

In this time, what do you mean? The church that will not receive a hundredfold now in this time. Houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions as well. And in the age to come, eternal life. You know what the problem with that is? The church doesn't always live as the church. You know, Jesus said when we come into the church, we get houses and we get brothers and we get sisters and we get all of this stuff, children and lands.

But so many of us, we're in our own little cocoon and we don't want to share. We don't want to share. We don't want to be involved with everybody else. But that's what the church is.

Not only is that what the church is, that's the blessing of what God created the church to be. So be it. Not only do you gain it in the gospel, but we need to perpetually live it as believers afterwards and fulfill the will of the Father.

[38 : 00] We don't know what happened after Jesus taught this lesson. It's difficult not to wonder, right? Like you want to kind of see what did Mary and the brothers say?

We know that Mary was indeed a faithful follower of Jesus. She did follow him as Lord. That we know that. We know that that is true of her. His brothers, on the other hand, didn't.

They actually continued in unbelief until after his resurrection. And it was only after his resurrection that we see that they came to faith and actually believed him and followed him.

And then God used two of them. One was James and the other was Jude or Judas. God used those two men to actually write each a letter in the New Testament.

And I think that the introductions to their books, their letters are interesting. I just want to read them to you. James chapter 1 and verse 1 says this. James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the 12 tribes in the dispersion, greetings.

[39 : 06] Jude introduces his this way. Jude 1 and 2. Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are called beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ.

May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. Now Mark 3, both of these men were probably present. And they would have thought at that point that their earthly relationship to Jesus qualified them for entrance into the family of God.

That coupled with their nationalistic affiliation and being Jews. But did you notice in those introductions that neither of them mentioned that relationship?

Neither of them said, James, the brother of Jesus. He didn't say, Jude, the brother of Jesus.

Because after their salvation, they no longer thought of themselves as Jesus' brothers, but as Jesus' servants.

[40 : 10] What was it James said? James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. The word there is doulos. It actually means slave. James, the slave of Jesus.

Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ. This is so great. Because it tells us, it tells us what changes in an individual when they move from the outside to the inside.

They weren't counting on their blood relationship with Jesus anymore. He was their Lord now. It didn't matter to them anymore about being his brother.

They were his servant. That's what they wanted to be. And so it is with all those who know Christ. We rejoice in being heirs together with him. Of course we do. We need to. But we'd prefer to be known as his servants.

And he is our Lord.