

Fuller House

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Preacher: Rev. Aaron Roberts

[0 : 00] So nice to see you all. Somebody before the service said to me, yeah, it's nice to see who really loves Jesus, isn't it? Get in the church tonight. 50-something people, by the way.

Okay, we had a bet going. I thought it was 30. Yeah, 30. I said, no. All right. Matthew 12, 46 to 50. It's like a little cameo, right? If you're just joining us for the first time, we're going through the Gospel of Matthew. It's like a little cameo, isn't it? We've had all this really big stuff happen in the Gospels, and then sort of like right in the middle of all this really big stuff going on, if it was a movie, it's almost like the director sort of just turns the camera away from all this action to this little domestic sort of thing going on over here.

But it carries a lot of weight, this small little story. You'll remember, if you've been here, the last few chapters have been dominated by the theme of opposition to Jesus.

So Jesus is doing these amazing miracles, and the religious leaders have decided, though, that he's a threat, and he's some kind of sorcerer, perhaps, and they want to destroy him.

[1 : 12] So it's very dramatic. And then we have this little story. So Jesus is in a house, it would seem, and he's teaching. He's just called the Pharisees evil and adulterous.

And in the middle of that speech, in the middle of that sermon, somebody, Jesus say here, somebody just starts weaving their way through the crowd, gets up to Jesus and kind of leans in and says, Jesus, your mom is here.

Your mom's outside. And she wants to have a word with you. And the guy delivering this message, or girl delivering this message, did so in the middle of the sermon, which was a fairly, fairly decent sort of sermon here.

And they did it because they presumed Jesus would stop, didn't they? Otherwise, they'd just sort of wait until it all sort of finished, right? They presumed Jesus would stop, so they delivered this message.

And in that culture, it was family above all. And, I mean, it's Jesus' mom. Of course Jesus is going to stop and have a word, make sure everything's okay.

[2 : 29] If you've ever met with me in my office for whatever reason, and during that meeting my wife has called, you'll know that I always take that phone call.

Even if it's to just say, I can't talk, is everything okay? And because I want my wife to know that she can contact me whenever she wants because I have this really weird job.

I mean, that sounds right. That sounds like a good rule. It sounds like a very reasonable rule. You'd think Jesus would do something similar, honoring your parents and all that. So it's a shock that he doesn't. It's a shock that he doesn't stop and go and see his mom who's waiting outside.

What he does is actually he uses this as a teachable moment, and he stops and he asks this question. He goes, well, who is my mom? Who are my brothers?

And then he stretches out his hands, and he goes, here they are. They're right. They're all around me. If he was here, he would stretch out his hand. They're all around me here. This is my mother. Here's my brothers and sisters. And whoever does the will of my father is my brother, my sister, and my mother.

[3 : 39] It's still, though. Don't you just think, what if she was really sick? What if she was just checking in on him, make sure he's okay? Actually, we know why, though.

Here's the thing. Here's the thing. We actually know why she came to visit him. We get a small clue for the reason for this visit in Matthew, because it says there in 46, while Jesus was still speaking. It adds that little word there, while Jesus was still speaking. So it presents the visit subtly as an interruption to what Jesus was trying to accomplish.

You might think, Aaron, I know you went to a region, but you're reading too much into this, right, that one single word. I'm not. If you go to Mark's Gospel, it tells the same story, almost word for word.

Same little section, almost word for word. But in Mark's Gospel, sort of about here on the page, it adds another little detail to this, that something happened just before this, and I'll read it to you.

[4 : 48] In Mark's Gospel, Mark 3, verse 20, it says this. Jesus went to his home. A crowd gathered again so that they could not even eat, and when his family heard of it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, he's out of his mind.

See, Jesus' family believed that he'd gone crazy, and they wanted to seize him. And that word seize, it's a very strong word. It means to capture somebody. The next time that word is used in the New Testament, it's when the soldiers come to arrest Jesus.

It's the same word for crucifying him. So the family wanted to take charge of Jesus. They wanted to confine him, but perhaps they thought they could talk some sense into him to get him to tone his message down a little bit.

It's causing problems. So here in Matthew, verse 46, the family turn up. It's not a nice family visit. They're there to do some kind of intervention. If it was set in modern times, they would have hired a deprogrammer to help their child who had become indoctrinated by this cult.

So Mary and his brothers, you'll see also another little clue. It situates them outside. It says they were outside. It's this physical placement to show they were outside of what the Lord was doing there.

[6 : 03] Later in the Gospels, we know they come around to seeing Jesus as a savior. But at this point, he's a son and a brother who needs to be roped in.

That's the reason for the visit. So what does Jesus do now? Well, again, he said he takes this whole situation and he makes this big point about who is his family, who's my brother, who's my mother.

And it's important to know, so let's dig into that, but it's important to know what is he not saying?

Okay? What is he not saying? He is not saying that your physical, legal, biological family, however you want to phrase it, he's not saying that that's unimportant.

He's not saying family's unimportant, it's only the Lord's work that's important. He's not saying that. I remember doing communion in the morning service, so I'm back here and communion in the morning is, you know, and it's a thing, man.

And so, like, it's very serious. So it's very serious in the evening, but you don't want to mess it up.

So I'm doing communion, I'm back here. My daughter Bea, I don't know if you know Bea, my daughter, has somehow escaped from downstairs.

[7 : 18] And so I'm doing communion, moving objects around. And she runs up onto the stage and runs towards me, and it's very solid, the organ's playing, it's very strong.

Just runs up to me. So what am I going to do in that situation? So I just, you know, hand plant, hand plant. How dare you befoul the Lord's table?

I'm doing the Lord's work. No, I pick her up. I picked her up in one arm. I scooped her up in one arm and just sort of continue doing communion, moving things around the table until somebody came and helped me out after a few minutes.

Jesus is not saying family doesn't matter, right? We know this because later on in this gospel, we're going to get to a point where he gets stuck into the Pharisees because they are undermining the idea of family, actually.

On the cross, think about the cross. On the cross, Jesus doesn't say many things on the cross, right? He says a few words. But one of them is that he makes sure that John knows that he's supposed to look after Jesus' mother Mary and vice versa.

[8 : 31] Family, it's one of the most precious gifts that God has given to us. Jesus is on board with this. So he's not saying family doesn't matter. He's not even saying value family less. He's not even saying that. He's not saying cut yourself off from your family.

It's more like this. It's not so much that he's downgrading loyalty to family. He's just insisting on loyalty to God above all. That's what he's doing.

Another way to say it will be this. He's not saying family is not important. He's just saying it's not all important. There's something else that deserves greater allegiance.

And you don't have to push this down to lift up that other thing. So that's all that. This is what he's not saying. So what is he communicating here? Well, I think there are three things.

First, he's trying to communicate the kind of relationship which Christians should have with one another. So when we follow Jesus, we're adopted into his family. Jesus becomes brother. God becomes father.

[9 : 29] Which is just, I mean, it's just, you know, that's just an outstanding, incredible reality. We're brothers. This is my sister. This is my sister over here.

What does that mean? I mean, why use this language? All the good things that families should represent, which you might not have experienced, okay?

You might not have experienced these things. But all the good things that families should represent, permanence and sort of inclusion and unconditional love and security, these should be what Christians should enjoy with each other.

There's just this unbreakable tie we should have with one another. We become brothers and sisters. And I know, like, I know that sounds kitschy.

I mean, it's not language we use regularly because it does sound a bit kitschy and cheesy. I just feel like we should sort of reclaim these words. I think they're wonderful descriptions of the kind of relationship we should have with each other and that exists spiritually.

[10 : 35] So we take an interest in other people's lives like we would do for our biological, legal family members. That kind of interest we have with them, we take with each other.

We serve and labor and love each other like a family because Jesus calls us a family. I want to remind you of a really common phrase in the New Testament. The phrase is one another.

One another. So in the New Testament, about 50 or 60 times, the New Testament says, you should one another.

Okay? So let me fill you in on the brips. I'll read a few of these to you. Jesus says, as I've loved you, you should love one another. It says that one quite a few times. I'm going to read out like 10 of them.

Be devoted to one another in brotherly and sisterly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Live in harmony with one another. Stop passing judgment on one another.

[11 : 36] Accept one another as Christ has accepted you. Instruct one another. Serve one another in love. Be humble and gentle, patient, bearing with one another. Be kindly, compassionate to one another.

Speak to one another in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs. Submit to one another in reverence. Let the word of Christ dwell on you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom. Encourage one another. Build each other up. Spur one another on to love and good deeds. Love one another deeply from the heart. Offer hospitality to one another. Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another.

Greet one another. Just acknowledge that we exist. Greet one another. So like every church, we've got a ways to go, right? We've got a ways to go on this one.

But we are a family. That's a spiritual area. We are a family. This is not a friendship that we have with each other. It's deeper than that. We cannot not be family, that means, right? We can't not be family with another family member.

[12 : 39] We're not, this is not Facebook, all right? We can't just block somebody, defend somebody. We actually have to do the hard work of working it out with one another. We could do some more thinking on that, but I want to just keep moving.

So what's the second point? The first point, family. Second point, who was invited to be part of this family? Well, there's a really great word in verse 50. It says, whoever.

It's all-encompassing, isn't it? Whoever. Whoever does the will of my Father can be part of God's family. Whoever. Now, you might think, oh, but, you know, I've got some stuff.

I've got a past. I've got some, I've got a present as well. I've got a thing. Whoever can be part of God's family. Whoever. Any nation, profession, sex, divorced, old, young, you know, whatever Enneagram you are.

You know, child, single, married, grandparent, security guard, accountant. Whoever. Whoever. Whoever can be the brother of Jesus.

[13 : 44] Can be the sister of Jesus. I love this little detail, eh, in verse 49. It says, Jesus stretched out his hands.

So he's making this point, and then he stretches out his hands. Like this, to everyone. As Jesus is thinking these words, and he's thinking about these people that have been on this journey with him.

I love this motion, right? These guys, these folks, these are my brothers, these are my sisters. Like the surge of love was going through him. But we actually have to keep going here. So first point, we are a family.

Who can be part of this family? Whoever. Third point. There is a caveat, though. Did you notice that? Whoever does the will of the Father.

So that's a pretty serious caveat. What does that mean? This do the Father's will. The last time we saw this was right at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, chapter 7. So the Sermon on the Mount goes from chapter 5 to chapter 7.

[14 : 43] This is a big sermon. You know, it's like the Beatitudes, etc. As if to say, so Jesus referring back to that, as if to say, this is what the Father's will is.

Father's will, you want to know what that is? I mean, it's huge. But you can have a pretty good crack at understanding it by going to the Sermon on the Mount there. Now, this is not salvation by works. This is when God saves you by grace alone, by just a gift.

He saves you. It's a gift. He puts his life into you. His Holy Spirit, the very life of God is put into you. And you're invested with new motives, profoundly new motives, new interests.

And they express themselves in actions. So doing the will of the Father doesn't save you, but it's a sign that God has done something in your heart.

[15 : 48] So all these one another scriptures, these are signs of salvation. They're pictures of what happens when you follow Jesus. There are things that flow from a heart that's been reordered by the Holy Spirit.

So those are three points out of that sermon. Let me finish up here. So Jesus calls us to an allegiance to his Father, welcoming us, whoever, into his family, into this eternal relationship that he has had with his Heavenly Father.

And what happens when he invites you into that, it's not that you just become part of a team. You don't become part of an affiliate to an ideology.

You become a member of this huge family. And you have brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers in Africa and Luxembourg and Singapore and wherever you can think.

And these are spiritual ties, not physical ones. Now for some of you, there's two problems here.

One is that for some of you it's very hard to get your head around family because family's not been a positive thing for you.

[17 : 00] It's difficult to you. I'd be happy to talk to you about that if that's been a difficult thing. I grew up with, in my family there was addiction and violence. So I'm happy to talk to you about that. Perhaps you have a similar story.

So it can make it harder to sort of get your head around the beauty of what it means to be part of God's family. For others of you, the idea of allegiance to anything but family is really tough because your family's so wonderful and that's fantastic.

But Jesus, remember, is not saying don't be less committed to your family. He's just saying that Christ demands our greatest allegiance because it's just simply more wonderful and eternal.

So I'll finish with a quote from a guy called Richard Baxter who was a 17th century Protestant theologian. And it helps us to understand the fatherly love of God.

I want to finish with this. And then what I want us to do is just spend a little bit of time thinking about this. So let me read this quote and then I'll talk for 30 more seconds and then we'll have some time in prayer.

[18 : 05] Here's what Richard Baxter says. He goes, Is it a small thing in your eyes to be loved by God? To be the son, daughter, the spouse, the love, the delight of the King of glory.

Christian, believe this and think about it. You will be eternally embraced in the arms of love, which was from everlasting and will extend to everlasting.

Of the love which brought the son of God's love from heaven to earth, from earth to the cross, from the cross to the grave, from the grave to glory. That love which was weary, hungry, tempted, scorned, scourged, buffeted, spat upon, crucified, pierced, which fasted, prayed, taught, healed, wept, sweated, bled, died.

That love will eternally embrace you. Goodness, doesn't that sound awesome? So let's spend a few minutes thinking on this.

Sage is going to come up and play for us. Perhaps you could consider this, a couple of things. In these two minutes of quiet, perhaps you can consider, what does it mean to be part of this family?

[19 : 13] If you felt on the edge of it? What does it mean? Do you need to be reconciled? What does it mean to be part of this family? Or you could ask the Holy Spirit to help you.

If family is a difficult thing for you to wrap your head around. Or maybe you're here and you're not even a Christian. And you want to follow Jesus.

Then use this time to pray to God. God, forgive me. God, I want to follow you. And if you do that, would you come and tell me you've done that? I'd love to hear about it.

So Sage is going to play for us for two minutes. Think on these things. And then we'll pray together. Let's pray together.