

THE LORD'S FAMILY
Matthew 12:46-50

Intro: There were times in the life of our Lord when He did and/or said things which are difficult for us to understand and to explain to others. Such was the time when Joseph and Mary took our Lord with them to Jerusalem when He was only twelve years of age. Evidently they were traveling with other family members and friends, so that when they left to return to Nazareth, Joseph and Mary traveled a whole day before they realized that our Lord was not with them. When they came back and found Him, we have no record that He said that He was sorry. He simply said to them,

How is it that ye sought me?

wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

(Luke 2:49).

I know one man who told me that our Lord was guilty of disobedience to His parents on that occasion. He caused them grief because they said that they had sought Him "sorrowing" (Luke 2:48).

On another occasion when the Lord attended the marriage feast at Cana, you will remember that they ran out of wine. Mary was there with Him. When Mary learned about what had happened, she told the Lord, "They have no wine" (John 2:3), expecting Him to do something about it. His response to her was,

Woman, what have I to do with thee?

mine hour is not yet come (John 2:4).

Even though afterwards He turned water into a wine which was even better than what had been served at the first, it sounds like our Lord was less than respectful to His mother. He seemed not only to rebuke her for what she had done, but seemed to rebuke her also for her lack of understanding of His mission in the world. Did He violate the command which said, "Honour thy Father and thy mother"?

The text I have chosen for tonight presents us with a similar problem. Mary and our Lord's half-brothers came to Him in the midst of a busy ministry, and wanted to talk to Him. He seemed to refuse to recognize that He had any relationship with them at all because He said,

Who is my mother?

and who are my brethren?

It was almost like a slap in the face. And then turning to His disciples, and holding out His hand toward them said,

Behold my mother and my brethren!

for whosoever shall do the will of my Father

which is in heaven,

the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Those who look for anything like a legitimate criticism of

our Lord's behavior, latch on to incidents like this to accuse Him of sin. How can we answer them?

Well, we need to recognize, first of all, that the Bible clearly teaches that our Lord never did sin. If He had, He would have ceased to be God, and could not have become our Savior. The Apostle Peter not only said that He "did no sin," but he added, "Neither was guile found in his mouth." Cf. 1 Pet. 2:22. When the Lord threw out the challenge, "Which of you convinceth (convicteth) me of sin" (John 8:46), no one brought up any of these incidents. And you can be sure that His enemies would have searched tirelessly to find some evidence against Him if it were possible to find it.

Tonight I do not intend to take up all three of these incidents--just the last one. But perhaps in understanding the last one we will be able to see the explanation for what the Lord did in the first two.

Let me read the verses before us tonight. (Read Matt. 12:46-50.)

It always helps to understand any passage to look at its context. And so let us notice:

I. THE SETTING OF THIS INCIDENT.

Two things were happening:

- 1) Our Lord was becoming increasingly popular with the people.
- 2) There was strong opposition from our Lord's enemies.
In fact, if you will look back in this same chapter to verse 22, you will read that the Lord delivered a demon-possessed man who was both blind and dumb. As a result of the miracle, the man was able both to see and to speak. The Pharisees accused the Lord of casting out demons by the power of the Devil whom they called, "Beelzebub the prince of the demons."

So the Lord was faced with those who wanted to hear Him and to see His miracles. On the other hand, He was faced with the religious leaders who already wanted to do away with Him.

But now let me borrow a bit of information from Mark's Gospel. Describing the same event which led up to the Lord's words which we want to consider tonight, Mark tells us this:

And the multitude cometh together again,
so that they (our Lord and His disciples)
could not so much as eat bread.

And when his friends (our Lord's friends) heard of it,
they went out to lay hold on him:
for they said, He is beside himself (Mark 3:20, 21).

Now we can only attempt to put these pieces of information together to find out what was going on.

This, it would appear, all took place in Capernaum. It was a ministry which lasted over a period of days, how many days we cannot say. The Lord and His disciples were so busy teaching and ministering to the people that they did not have time to eat. And under all of the pressure they faced, the opposition of their enemies, the demands of the people, the long time that this had gone on coupled with the fact that the Lord especially was not getting any food, His friends got worried about Him. They felt that He could not stand the pressure any more. They felt that He was already showing signs of breaking, of losing His mind.

I would add this further word although I have not run across this in my reading. I believe that when the Lord's friends could not stop Him, they said among themselves, "There is only one person who can stop Him, and that is His mother. And if we can get His brothers to come with her, so much the better." And so they sent to Nazareth to get Mary to come down.

Now I can't say that I'm right about how Mary and our Lord's brothers got there. They may have already been there. But putting the pieces together it seems more likely to me that they sent for her to get her to get our Lord to stop the intensive ministry that He was doing.

This was the setting for what took place.

Next we see:

II. THE INTERRUPTION CAUSED BY MARY AND OUR LORD'S BROTHERS
(Matt. 12:46, 47).

There is no question but that Mary was a true believer. She may not have understood all that she needed to know, but the early chapters of Luke's Gospel leave no doubt concerning her salvation. The situation about our Lord's brothers was different. It seems that the Apostle John was speaking of a later time than the incident before us when he recorded, "For neither did his brethren believe in him" (John 7:5).

Therefore, our Lord's brothers would not have been sensitive to the nature of our Lord's ministry, and we can see why they would have no hesitation in lit. "calling Him out of church to talk with them." With Mary it would have been different. She would have realized how important our Lord's ministry was, but was willing to intrude upon His ministry because of her great concern for (1) His safety, and (2) His health.

The sessions that the Lord had with people probably went on for hours at a time, and so there was no easy way for them to get to talk to the Lord.

I am sure that you mothers can understand how she felt. Men sometimes do break under the pressure of what they are doing. Men in the ministry have been known to break down. This is what they feared was happening to our Lord.

Let us not dismiss this saying that He could not break down because He was the Son of God. He grew weary in the ministry. Evidently when He got to Samaria when the disciples went on into the city to get food, He was too tired to go with them. And we must not forget the terrible agony the Lord was in when He sweat blood, great drops of blood, in the Garden of Gethsemane. So we really cannot say what might have happened.

Anyway, Mary and our Lord's brothers were there, and the word got to our Lord.

He did not ignore the message. Nor did He tell them to wait until He got finished with His message. What did He do?

Note:

III. OUR LORD'S RESPONSE (Matt. 12:48-50).

He responded by speaking directly to the one who brought the message to Him. Perhaps the interruption had caused so much attention that the people knew what was going on. So the Lord asked a question.

A. Our Lord's question (Matt. 12:48).

The Lord asked, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?"

I think we would all have to say that that really sounded disrespectful. It sounds like the Lord was not giving His mother the honor that was required under the Law. And yet we know that was not the case! It can't be the explanation for what the Lord did. As I have said, if the Lord had dishonored His mother, He would have been guilty of sin. We need to bring what we know about the Lord to this difficult situation so that we will not get off of the track. We need to understand what the Lord was doing.

The man who gave the information to the Lord that His mother and brothers were there, and wanted to speak to Him, was speaking about their natural, human, relationship to the Lord. Mary was His mother after the flesh. He was conceived

in her womb by the Holy Spirit. Afterwards, it seems, she had other children by Joseph, so that the men who were with her were our Lord's half-brothers, but they would have been called His brothers.

The Lord knew all of this, and was not trying to deny it, nor to humiliate them. But the Lord was seizing upon the opportunity to teach His mother, His brothers, and everyone present, of an even greater relationship. And so He asked the question.

However, the Lord not only asked a question, but He answered it.

B. The Lord's answer to His own question (Matt. 12: 49, 50).

The man who told the Lord about His mother and brothers was actually saying, "Your family wants to see you. They have something that they want to talk to you about."

But the Lord responded by saying about His disciples, "This is my family."

And then He went on to add the words which we have in verse 50. (Read.)

Do you remember that occasion where Luke tells us that a woman in a crowd spoke up so that everyone around could hear what she said? She said this:

Blessed is the womb that bare thee,
and the paps which thou hast sucked (Luke 11:27).

She was saying that Mary was so blessed because she had given birth to the Lord, and had nursed Him as a little baby. And probably most women would have agreed with her. And it is true that Mary was "blessed...among women" and "highly favored." And yet the Lord went on to point out that this woman was wrong. The greatest blessing that can come to a woman is not to be the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ. THAT WOULD NOT GET HIS MOTHER TO HEAVEN! This is how the Lord corrected that woman:

Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it (Luke 11:28).

Perhaps you feel that it would have been the greatest of all blessings to have been the mother of the Lord, or to have been even a half-brother or a half-sister (because according to Matt. 13:56 our Lord had half-sisters too). That truly must have been a blessing, a great blessing, but a blessing that was reserved for just a few. However, there is a blessing that is even greater than that. It is to be in the

family of God, and to be related to the Lord Jesus Christ in that way. The relationship that Mary and her family had with the Lord in His human family was only temporary. And it would not have gotten any of them to heaven. But to be related to the Lord Jesus Christ as a member of God's family, is an eternal relationship, and it is open to all who will come to Him, and believe on Him.

But going back to our text, be sure to notice how the Lord stated what it means to be in His family, His spiritual family. It was not just by being a disciple (because we know that our Lord had one disciple, Judas Iscariot, who was not a true member of His heavenly family. The way you identify one who is a true member of the Lord's family is that he does, as the Lord said, "the will of my Father which is in heaven." Or, to take the words found in Luke 11:28, "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

It was not enough to be a member of the Lord's family in Nazareth. It was not enough to be a disciple. A child of God is identified by his desire to live according to the will of God which is expressed in the Word of God. Faith is manifested by works, works of obedience to the Word of God.

Concl: What does this incident from the life of our Lord teach us?

It shows us how easily people were influenced by the Lord as a Man, but overlooked completely His message and the mission for which He had come into the world. The women of Israel envied Mary because she was the Lord's mother, and probably others were just as envious of His brothers and sisters. We need to see our need of Christ as our Savior. This is the only way we can get into the family of God.

The writer of the book of Hebrews had this to say about being the Lord's brothers, members of His family:

For it became him, for whom are all things,
and by whom are all things,
in bringing many **sons** into glory,
to make the captain of their salvation
perfect through sufferings.
For both he that sanctifieth
and they who are sanctified are all of one:
for which cause he is not ashamed
to call them brethren (Heb. 2:10, 11).