

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 23 June 2024. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Christian's New Family

Matthew 12:46-50

On 17 September 1983, my dad and mom opened up a Bible in our sitting room, and explained God's plan of salvation to me; and on that sunny Saturday afternoon, I believed the Gospel message. No longer did I merely *know in my head* that Jesus died on the cross for my sins, and rose again on the third day to conquer death for me: I now believed this message with my *heart*. That day, I repented of my sin, placed my personal trust in Jesus Christ, and asked Him to come into my heart, and to be my Lord and Saviour. At the moment when I believed on Jesus, I was "born" spiritually into the family of God; and my heart was flooded with peace and joy. I couldn't keep quiet about it, either. I began to tell everyone that I was now a *child of God*, and a member of Christ's royal family.

Forty years have passed since that wonderful day; and through the years, there is an experience that I have had on at least a half dozen occasions. There have been times when I was in a public place (perhaps a doctor's office, or a restaurant, or some other public venue); and I observed a man, or a lady, a short distance away, talking and interacting with others—or, perhaps, simply sitting there quietly, and minding his own business. I watched that person for a short while; and as I did so, I didn't specifically hear him (or her) talking about God, or the Lord Jesus, or the Bible; and I didn't see him reading a Bible, or giving anyone a tract, or praying. Furthermore, that person (though dressed modestly) was not necessarily dressed or groomed in a unique way, which would set him apart as a Christian; nor was he (or she) wearing a cross anywhere on his clothing or jewellery. Yet, there was a certain light in that person's eye, and a certain joy in his countenance, and a certain love, graciousness, confidence, and purpose in his speech (if he *did* happen to be speaking), which made me wonder if that person were a fellow born-again Christian. I also noticed that that person was watching *me*, as well. Finally, either I, or that other person, ventured to ask the other, "Excuse me; but I was wondering if you happen to be a Christian." We both cheerfully confessed to each other that we *were* born-again Christians; and then, we shared our testimonies with each other, and found that we were, indeed, brothers (or brother and sister) in Christ. We asked each other probing questions about the other's testimony, to make sure that the other was a *genuine* Christian, and not a fake, nominal one; yet, neither of us was offended by the frank and personal questions that the other was asking. In fact, we were both *delighted* that there was another genuine Christian out there, who cared about people's souls; and we were happy to talk about the Lord. How did we know that the other person was a Christian? Because we both belong to the same spiritual family! God was our Father; Jesus Christ was our elder Brother; and the Holy Spirit of God was in both our hearts, where He was enlightening our countenances with His love. We each had a "holy glow" about us, which the other was able to recognise. By the way, I'm not the only one who has experienced this sort of thing. A number of Christian friends have told me that they have experienced this same thing!

Members of God's Family can be found among all peoples and nations; and, as the Apostle John put it, ***"Every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him."*** In other words, every

true Christian loves God the Father (the one who “begat” him into His family); and he also loves *others* whom the Father has begotten (fellow brothers and sisters in Christ). This morning, we will be talking about this family—the Family of God! The title of this message is **The Christian’s New Family**.

Read Matthew 12:46-50.

I. Jesus’ earthly family (vv. 46-47)

Over the past several weeks, we have been examining the things that Jesus said to the Pharisees after they had accused Him of casting out devils through the power of Satan. As Jesus responded to the Pharisees, He did not sugarcoat their sins: He told them exactly what they needed to hear. (And it wasn’t pretty!) First, He informed them that they were guilty of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit—a sin which, He assured them, can never be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in the next. Next, He told them that they were “corrupt trees,” and venomous “vipers”; that their hearts were filled with “*evil treasure*”; and that they would one day be judged for every idle word that came out of their mouths. When the Pharisees angrily demanded a sign from Him, He called them an “*evil and adulterous generation*,” and told them that *no* sign would be given to them, except the sign of the prophet Jonah. He went on to explain His meaning: just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so He would be three days and three nights in the earth, before rising back to life. (This, of course, implied that these men would *murder* Jesus!) Jesus then informed the Pharisees that even the wicked men of Nineveh, and the heathen queen of Sheba, would participate in passing judgment upon them on the Judgment Day, because these pagan Gentiles had *repented* of their sin, whereas the Pharisees refused to repent. Then, to top it all off, Jesus compared the greater part of the nation of Israel to a man who has “cleaned himself up” morally, and who has been freed from a demon—only for the demon to return to that man with *seven more* demons even more wicked than himself, and afflict him even more grievously! What Jesus was saying is that Israel was already under judgment from God, because they were trying to “clean themselves up” morally, without coming to *Christ* for cleansing and salvation; and as the result, they were even more vulnerable to demonic affliction. More and more people were being possessed by demons, because they, as a nation, refused to believe on the Light of the World, when He was right there in their midst!

Needless to say, Jesus was *not* scoring popularity points with His audience! Jesus wasn’t merely *stepping* on toes: He was *stomping* on toes! The Pharisees, and probably most of the people in the crowd, were furious. They were God’s people—the children of Abraham. How dare Jesus say that filthy *Gentiles* will judge them? How *dare* He compare them to a demon-possessed man? And what was this that He was saying about His being dead and buried for three days, and then rising again? Undoubtedly, even Jesus’ disciples were cringing at the things that He was saying—not because they disbelieved Him, but because they feared the consequences of His bold words against the religious rulers of Israel! However, the disciples weren’t the only ones who were uncomfortable. Let’s read **verses 46 and 47** again, and see who else was uncomfortable! **(Read Matthew 12:46-47.)**

As Jesus was preaching that day, His mother and His brothers were standing at the edge of the crowd; and apparently, His brothers were so embarrassed and upset about the things that Jesus was saying, that they decided to put a stop to it. They sent someone to squeeze through the crowd as quickly as possible, and to deliver a message from them, with the hope that He would stop talking. According to Matthew, the messenger actually *interrupted* Jesus in the middle of His sermon. Matthew reports that “***While he yet talked to the people,***” the messenger came and spoke to Him. Jesus was saying things that could get Himself (and possibly his family) put out of the synagogue, or worse; and they wanted Jesus to shut His mouth! In fact, one Scripture indicates that Jesus’ brothers thought that He was *mad*.

Read Mark 3:20-21.

The Greek word for “friends” in **verse 21** is the word *par*; and this word is based on the preposition *para*, which means “alongside.” *Par* means “people who are close by”—in other words, “loved ones.” This word can refer to a person’s family, or to his friends, or both. Also, the sermon that Mark records for us in **Mark 3** is the same one that Matthew records in **Matthew 12**. What does this mean, then? It means that the event in **Mark 3**, and the event in **Matthew 12**, is the very same event; and the people that Mark calls “friends” were, in fact, Jesus’ own brothers! Jesus’ *own brothers* thought that He had lost His mind; and they wanted to shut Him up! Mary was probably trying to *stop* her sons from interrupting Jesus’ preaching; but they obviously ignored her. They sent this message in *her* name, as well as their own.

Now, this begs a question: what kind of relationship did Jesus have with His own family? We know, of course, that His mother Mary was a godly believer. When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her that “***The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God,***” Mary responded in *faith and submission* to the Lord. She said, “***Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.***” Mary was a believer; and for 30 years, she had been eagerly awaiting the day when Jesus would sit down on the throne of David. Mary followed Jesus around for many of His preaching tours, and ministered to the needs of Him and His Apostles. Mary acknowledged Jesus as *her Saviour*; even though she was His earthly mother. However, such was not the case with Jesus’ four brothers. Let’s see who Jesus’ brothers were, and then see what they thought of Jesus.

Read Matthew 13:54-58.

Read John 7:1-9.

James, Joses, Simon, and Judas were Jesus' *half*-brothers—the sons of Joseph and Mary. (Jesus was their *half* brother, because He shared the same mother with them, but had no human father.) These four men had known Jesus from childhood; and if there were any people on earth who *should* have believed that Jesus is the sinless Son of God, it was they. Yet, sadly, Jesus' own brothers didn't believe on Him. (They probably had always resented growing up with a brother who was literally *perfect* all the time!) Now, after Jesus' resurrection, Jesus' brothers James and Judas *did* believe on Jesus, and were saved. In **1 Corinthians 15:7**, Paul specifically mentions that James was one of the many people who saw Jesus after He had risen from the grave. In fact, James became one of the early pastors of the Jerusalem church, and later wrote the New Testament book of **James**. Jesus' brother Judas wrote the New Testament book of **Jude**, as well. We also know, from records outside the Bible, that Jesus' brother Simon was later saved, and became an outstanding servant of God. However, at this point in Jesus' ministry, all four of Jesus' brothers were still unbelievers. Evidently, Jesus' own brothers didn't believe the story about Jesus' miraculous virgin birth, which their parents had told them: otherwise, they would *have* to acknowledge that He is the Messiah.

Now, you can really hear the sarcasm in the brothers' voices as they questioned Jesus about whether He would go up to the feast, can't you? Basically, they were saying, "If you're really the Messiah, now is the time to declare it openly! The Feast of Tabernacles is coming: and if you really be the Messiah, don't you think you should *prove* yourself to be the Messiah during the Feast of Tabernacles? It's the biggest feast of the year, when people come to Jerusalem from all over the world. Why are you so hesitant of going to the feast, Jesus? Are you afraid that you'd be killed? We thought that the Messiah wasn't *supposed* to die!" But what was Jesus' answer to them? He simply said, "***My time is not yet come.***" What "time" was He talking about? He was talking about the time when He would prove Himself to be the Messiah. There was a *definite, appointed time* that God the Father had ordained to show the world that Jesus is His Son, and the Messiah—and, by so doing, to bring glory to Himself. What was that time? Let's take a look.

Read John 2:1-4 / 3:14 / 8:28 / 12:31-32 / 13:31-32.

Do you see what Jesus is saying? He is saying that those agonising hours on the *cross* would be His "time." *The cross* was the "hour" when Jesus was glorified before the world, and proven to be the Messiah! Now, this goes against human reasoning, doesn't it? How could being stripped naked, beaten to a bloody pulp, nailed to a cross, and dying a criminal's death, be Jesus' "hour"? How could *that* be the time of His glory? How could such a horrible, ghastly image *draw all men* to Jesus? Human reason says that doing some kind of stupendous *miracle*—a miracle to end all miracles—in a place where everyone could see it (such as at the Temple, during the Feast of Tabernacles), would be the thing that would prove Jesus to be the Messiah. Surely *that* will be Jesus' "time," right? Nope. Not in God's eyes! You see, God

doesn't reckon things the way we do. To man, Jesus' death on the cross was a disgrace; but to God, it was *glory*. In **Isaiah 53:10-11**, Isaiah prophesied, "***Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him*** [His Son, the Messiah]; ***he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He*** [the Father] ***shall see of the travail of his soul*** [the Son's soul], ***and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.***"

The cross was Jesus' time of glory, because it was the time when God's justice against our sin was satisfied. Because of what Jesus suffered for us in that horrible hour, God the Father is able to redeem us, and declare us to be "righteous." Because of what Jesus did on the cross, He is able to snatch sinners from Satan's family, and translate them into His family; and in so doing, God the Father is glorified. Yet, it all had to happen at the right time. God had announced *in advance* the exact time when it would happen. About 550 years before Jesus' birth, God revealed to the prophet Daniel that it would be 69 "weeks of years" (483 years) from the time when the decree would be made to rebuild the broken-down walls of Jerusalem to the time when the Messiah would be killed; and history proved this prophecy to be accurate *to the day*. It was exactly 483 years from the day when King Artaxerxes of Persia decreed for the walls of Jerusalem to be rebuilt, to the day when Jesus was crucified. The decree was made on the 14th of Nisan, 454 B.C.; and Jesus died on the 14th of Nisan, 30 A.D.—483 years later.

It was in God's plan from eternity past for His Son to be glorified as Messiah *on the cross*, at the exact right time in history, so that all men might be drawn to Himself. Yet, Jesus' brothers cynically questioned Jesus' timing. They could not see the wisdom of His plan; and thus, they scorned it. You know, we, in our fleshly wisdom, always want things to go according to *our* plan, and *our* schedule, don't we? That's why Jesus told His brothers, "***Your time is always ready.***" In other words, they were evaluating things according to their own human, fleshly reasoning. They had *their own* time that they wanted the Messiah to make His debut; and that time was *now*. They wanted the Messiah to come *right now*, and to do the things for them that *they* expected Him to do. They looked at Jesus' delay in going to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles as a poor choice of timing. Therefore, they concluded that He wasn't really the Messiah. ("Otherwise, He would have known that *this is the right time* to prove Himself!") They also were not impressed with Jesus' choice not to go into Judea because of the threats against His life. They figured, "What kind of Messiah is this? If He really be the Messiah, then why is He afraid of being killed? The Messiah can't be killed! If He's really the Messiah, why is He avoiding danger?" They didn't understand that Jesus was avoiding arrest not because He was afraid to die, but because *it wasn't His time to die*. In fact, they didn't understand that the Messiah *was supposed to die* in order to pay for the sins of the world.

Unbelievers still question Christ's wisdom to this day. For example, many people mock the promise of Jesus' return. They figure that since it's been 2,000 years now, and Jesus still hasn't returned, He must not be coming; and they mockingly say, "***Where is the promise of his coming?***" Unbelievers also question the Lord about the timing of things in their own lives. They say, "Why didn't God do anything for me when I needed Him most? If He exist, then where was He in my hour of need?" They have no clue that God *has been there all along*, working in their lives through trying circumstances, in order to draw them to Himself. They can't see His providential working in their lives, because they are interested only in *their* will being done in their lives, and not God's. They think that God should be their personal genii, to give them whatever they want, whenever they want it. All they care about is getting the things of this world that *they* want, and getting them *right now*. They aren't the least bit interested in bowing their knees to Christ, and letting Him be the Lord of their lives.

Folks, *God's* plan for us is completely different from *our* plans. God's plan is that sinners might be saved from their sin by receiving His Son's gift of salvation: and the time to receive that gift is *now*, while the door is still open. Thank God, Jesus' brothers eventually did receive the gift of salvation; but it was only of God's mercy that God extended the invitation to them. The Bible says, "***Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.***" If *you* have not received the gift of salvation, please don't wait any longer!

II. Jesus' spiritual family (vv. 48-50)

(Read Matthew 12:48-50 again.) Jesus had now reached an important turning point in His ministry. The Kingdom of Messiah had been sincerely offered to Israel, *if* they would receive Jesus as their King and Saviour. However, most of the Jewish people were rejecting Jesus (as His heated conversation with the Pharisees reveals). You'll notice that from this point onward, Jesus no longer said, "***The kingdom of heaven is at hand.***" The Kingdom was no longer "near." Because of Israel's unbelief, the Kingdom has been put *on hold*; and Israel, as a nation, has been set aside. However, as I have said many times before, *God is not done with Israel*. He has been preserving the Jewish people for 2,000 years, even during the darkest days of persecution; and in the last century, God has brought Israel back to their land. He is preparing them for the terrible seven-year Tribulation period, when, as a nation, they will finally believe on Jesus as their Messiah. Then, just after the Tribulation, when Christ returns to earth, He will exalt Israel among the nations. Christ will reign over the whole world from Jerusalem; and Jew and Gentile will live together in peace for 1,000 years. However, in the meantime, Israel, as a whole, is in a state of unbelief, just as they were when Jesus was on earth; and, as we have just seen, even Jesus' brothers refused to believe on Him!

Now, Jesus knew very well what this little message from His brothers was all about. He knew that His brothers were trying to shut Him up. And so, Jesus took the opportunity to make an

astounding statement. He pointed to His followers and said, **“Behold my mother and my brethren”!** Though most of the people of Israel had rejected Him, Jesus regarded this little remnant of believers—this little “Israel” within Israel—to be His true family. Jesus regards *all* who believe on Him to be His “mother and brethren,” spiritually speaking. And speaking of “mothers,” you’ll notice that Jesus never *exalted* His mother Mary, or commanded us to worship her, as the Catholic Church does. Jesus *never* called Mary the “Mother of God.” And why not? Because *God has no mother!* Mary was mother to Jesus in His *humanity*—but not in His *divine* nature. Furthermore, Mary was a sinner, just like us; and she herself called Jesus her “Saviour” (**Luke 1:46-47**). Jesus honoured Mary for her faith and obedience; yet, He considers *any* woman who believes on Him to be like a “mother” to Him!

My friends, there are only two spiritual families—Satan’s family, and God’s family. You don’t have to do something “really bad” to end up in Satan’s family, because we were all *born* into Satan’s family. We were all born in sin, and separated from God, from the moment we entered this world. That is why we must be *translated* from Satan’s family to God’s family, by placing our faith in God’s Son, Jesus Christ. **John 1:12** says, **“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”**

Read Ephesians 3:14-15.

Read Hebrews 2:9-18.

Christian, the moment you believed on Jesus, you were *immediately* translated into God’s family. God is now your Father; and Christ is your Brother. Why is Christ called your “Brother”? Because He is part of the human family—a real, flesh-and-blood descendant of Adam! Though Christ never stopped being God when He came down into our world, He *took on* a human nature, in addition to His divine nature. He is both God *and* Man. That is why Jesus told Mary Magdalene on the morning of His resurrection, **“Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.”**

Now, God will never be “Father” to *us* in the same sense that He is Father to His Son, Jesus Christ. The relationship of the Father and the Son is unique. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct Persons, yet one eternal God. There is no other relationship like theirs! Nevertheless, the Father *does* condescend to call us who believe on Him His “children”; and He calls Christ our “Brother”! This means that *we who are saved* are brother and sister to each other; and we should treat each other as such! We should love each other, care for each other, hurt with each other, rejoice with each other, and pray for each other. **First Timothy 5:1-2** says, **“Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.”**

My friend, if you don't know Christ as your Saviour, you are not in God's family. You are on the outside, looking in; and I am here to urge you to *get inside!* There is nothing more wonderful than being part of God's family. When you come to Christ for salvation, you become part of His royal family; and no matter what trial or persecution you may endure in this world for Jesus' sake, nothing will ever sever you from Him, and from His love.

Read Mark 10:28-30.

Jesus promised that those who leave all to follow Him, and to preach His Gospel, will receive "***an hundred fold now in this time.***" Is Jesus promising that if you preach the Gospel, you'll be *materially wealthy*? No! He's promising something far better. Let's take a closer look.

First, Jesus promised that those who leave their loved ones behind to preach the Gospel will be given "***brethren,***" "***sisters,***" "***mothers,***" and "***children.***" Now, in what sense can you receive another "mother"? Obviously, Jesus isn't talking about *biological* family members: He's talking about *spiritual* family members. Those who leave their loved ones in order to go to distant places to preach the Gospel are promised that they will receive *new* family members! Those whom you lead to Christ become your spiritual "family"! Also, those whose loved ones *abandoned* and *disowned* them because of their faith in Jesus are promised that they will receive a new, spiritual family. Of course, this is all in accordance with how faithfully we preach the Gospel to others. The more you share the Gospel with people, the more likely it is that people will get saved; and the more your spiritual "family" will grow!

Now, Christ also promised "houses" and "lands" to those who preach the Gospel. Here is where the promise of material wealth comes in, right? Again, the answer is "no"! Jesus isn't talking about owning *physical* houses and lands, or of being wealthy. How do I know? Because Jesus said that these "houses and lands" will come "***with persecutions.***" (Persecution and material prosperity don't exactly go together!) The reality is that Christ's followers are often poor and destitute, on account of persecution from those who hate the Gospel. What did Jesus mean, then, when He promised "houses and lands"? Jesus was saying that if you leave your house and your land to preach the Gospel, God will see to it that you have houses (think, "homes") where you may receive encouragement, and enjoy fellowship with your spiritual family. As Christ and the Apostles went out preaching the Gospel, *many* homes were opened to them; and they had sweet fellowship with their hosts. This promise of "houses" and "lands" simply means, "As you go to other lands to preach the Gospel, I will provide you with spiritual family, who will open their homes to you, and support and encourage you."

Of course, the greatest promise of all is the promise of "eternal life" in the "world to come." Eternal life begins the moment you enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ, by faith; and it

continues through eternity! Those of us who have believed on Jesus will have joy and gladness in the Father's house throughout eternity; and our spiritual family will be with us through the countless ages, to share our joy with us!

Conclusion: In closing, I would ask: Are you a member of God's family? You're either "in," or you're not. There is no in between. To get into God's family, you must repent of your sin, and believe on the Son of God! Place your complete trust in *Jesus*, and in the price that He paid with His blood to purchase your salvation! If you are saved already, I would end with this exhortation: Love your heavenly Father; love your elder Brother, Jesus Christ; and love your brothers and sisters in Christ! Jesus said, "***By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.***"