

June 6, 2021

**“We Are Family”
Sermon by Rev. Susan Drake**

Psalm 138

*I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart;
before the gods I sing your praise;
I bow down toward your holy temple
and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness;
for you have exalted your name and your word
above everything.
On the day I called, you answered me,
you increased my strength of soul.
All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord,
for they have heard the words of your mouth.
They shall sing of the ways of the Lord,
for great is the glory of the Lord.
For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly;
but the haughty he perceives from far away.
Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies;
you stretch out your hand,
and your right hand delivers me.
The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me;
your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever.
Do not forsake the work of your hands.*

Mark 3: 20–22, 31-35

*Then he went home; and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat.
When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, “He has gone out of his mind.” And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, “He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.”, “Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”— for they had said, “He has an unclean spirit.”*

Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.” And he replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

Sermon “We Are Family”

The first part of the gospel reading this morning always reminds me of how celebrities are treated. The crush of the paparazzi, the lack of privacy. This is the third or fourth crowd scene in Mark and Jesus is overwhelmed by this point and just wants to be alone for a minute.

Mark tells us that they couldn't even get a moment to eat. Everybody wanting to hear the good news, everybody wanting to be healed, everybody wanting a piece of Jesus. Now remember we are only in the third chapter of the first gospel written, so Jesus is just getting started. But man he's been busy. He has already been baptized, healed several people, he has been all over preaching forgiveness, giving people their worth back, ridding them of the things that plague their spirits.

He is being followed around the countryside by hoards of people just wanting to be okay, to be made whole again, just aching for the good news that they are loved by God.

Also, I should add, in the process of those three chapters Jesus has infuriated the religious leaders of the day, wasting no time breaking several of their religious codes and, to put salt in the wound, he has snubbed them by sitting down with the outcasts, the sinners, and tax collectors, instead of them. He has upset them so much so that at this point, like the people he is drawn to, he is an outsider to them. And then his family shows up. So he's hungry and overwhelmed and on top of it all here comes his family.

Now they didn't just show up to check in and see how he was doing. They didn't just stop by for a visit, no the scripture tells us this: “When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, “He has gone out of his mind.”

Isn't that just like humans, when society doesn't understand someone by the rules they live by, we tend to dismiss their claims, we tell them they are nuts, say they are out of their minds. Jesus is an outsider and he has made the powers that be very uncomfortable.

Now Jesus brings us the good news that we are loved by God and we are forgiven for all our failings, but he never promises that it will make us comfortable. Being on the right side of God can often mean being on the wrong side of your family, the wrong side of your friends, your community, even your religion and country.

When my life is drawing to a close I know I will be asking myself. “Did I do enough to make sure the gospel of Jesus lives on?” Not the prosperity gospel, or the gospel of merely singular, individual salvation but this one, the gospel that sometimes puts you on the outside of everything when you declare that everyone is loved and forgiven and worthy of healing.

Think about it, what if you stood up in a city council meeting or something like that and shouted “We can do better than this!”, “We can care for the poor in our community better!” “We can care for those who suffer from domestic violence or don't have enough to eat, or make our kids feel

safer!” They would look at you like you were out of your mind right? You would become an outsider.

What if you stood up at thanksgiving and announced: black, brown, gay, or trans lives matter, or that thoughts and prayers aren't enough anymore, would you be making yourself an outsider? Probably leaving some of your family members upset and thinking “Is she out of her mind? What has possessed her?”

When you lead people into God's loving arms and tell them they are enough, they are loved and have value and that they matter and begin to heal the wounds they have born all their lives, you are an outsider. But get this-- when you do this, when you work to create a more just and loving world, you may be an outsider, but you are standing out there, on the outside, with Jesus himself.

And like Jesus, you will be out of your mind because you are seeking the mind of God. And Mark tells us that You are part of Jesus's family when you do God's will.

God's family is not a family of boundaries and boxes or rules, prejudice, or hatefulness, resentment, or scarcity. In God's family we are all equals, we are all fed, we are all worthy of healing, and hope. May we all seek it, to ask for God's guidance on what God's will is and be a part of the family of God. AMEN

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