

Matthew 12:46-50 | “Who is Family Here?”
Preached on September 17, 2023 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew 12, verse 46. *[pause]*

This morning, we will be really focusing in on verses 46-50 of chapter 12, but I will summarize what goes before it for you in a little bit. *[pauseeee]*

When I first met Kate, I started attending many of her family’s gatherings and there were so many people there. *[pause]*

As many of you know who start dating or marry someone with a large family, it’s hard to keep everyone straight.

So when I would attend her family gatherings, a question that would come to my mind is, “So who is family here?” *[pause]*

The reason is because sometimes there were friends who were invited or girlfriends and boyfriends that came along.

And what Kate would have to do was she had to explain to me who was family and who was not. *[pauseeee]*

So at a Thanksgiving dinner, Kate would say, “That guy over there is my cousin, and that’s my uncle and aunt, and that’s my other cousin.”

And there would also be other people there who weren’t family.

So she would explain, “That’s a friend of my aunt’s, who didn’t have a place to go for Thanksgiving.”

Or, “That’s the girlfriend of my cousin.” *[pauseeee]*

I wanted to know who her family was and who was not, so I could start to put things together in my mind.

I wanted to know who Kate’s family was. *[pause]*

Well in our text this morning, Jesus will show us who *His* family is.

No one asks Him that question, but He uses a situation with his earthly family to show who His true family is.

And what we find is that His family is bigger and deeper than we first think. *[pauseeee]*

So chapter 12 is mostly about the opposition that Jesus faces, especially from the Pharisees. *[pause]*

They tried to catch Him in Sabbath breaking, but it didn't work, for He is the Lord of the Sabbath.

And they get so mad that they conspire about how to destroy Him.

But there's no way that they could ever defeat Jesus, for He is the promised Servant of God, who the nations would hope in. *[pauseeee]*

Their true hideous character is then seen in how they claim that He is casting out demons by Beelzebub, who is Satan.

Yet Jesus shows the foolishness of this thinking, for how could Satan be against himself?

And Jesus points out that the Pharisees' words just prove that they are evil, and will face judgment for it. *[pauseeee]*

They then go on to ask for a sign, but Jesus refuses, for they had already seen plenty and refused to believe.

He had done great miracles and signs, removing demons from their people, yet they would eventually be worse off in the end, if they didn't turn to Him. *[pauseeee]*

All of this rejection of Christ is overwhelming, and even His own earthly family seems to come to try to rescue him from the overwhelming rejection...

But here in our passage, Jesus shows us that there are those who are receptive and who are His family, amidst all of the rejection.

Let's READ verses 46-50. *[READ]*

So Jesus is speaking to the crowds, and it seems as though He's inside of a home, for his family is outside and can't get to him.

So a messenger relays that his mother and brothers want to speak to Him. *[pause]*

Now the question is "why?"

Why do they want to speak to Him? *[pause]*

Here in Matthew, we aren't given the answer, but we do get an answer in the parallel account in the gospel of Mark...

For in Mark, before this story, it says, "And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, 'He is out of his mind.'"¹ *[pause]*

¹ Mark 3:21.

So it appears that his family has heard about the animosity that is being stirred up between him and the religious leaders, and they are probably thinking, “Oh man, this isn’t good.”

They think that he’s lost it, for why else would he say such things to anger the Pharisees, and they want to grab him and stop him, so that things will calm down. *[pauseee]*

So here they come, asking to talk to Him, which would interrupt His teaching of the people.

And they feel like they can do this because they are His earthly family, and they feel like they have that right and priority to do this.

But Jesus uses this situation to teach an important point about His family -- His true family was in front of Him...

They were those who do the will of the Father. *[pauseee]*

Just because they were Jesus’ earthly family didn’t mean they got preferential treatment or special access due to being related to Him physically.

In fact, there is significance in that they are described as being “outside”, while His disciples are inside. *[pause]*

And so at this point, His family doesn’t appear to follow Him no matter what, but is somewhat confused as to His mission.²

So He was closer to those who actually followed Him, not with those who may have been related, but tried to hinder Him.

And Christ wouldn’t forsake His true family to please His earthly family. *[pauseee]*

That’s the story, but this morning I want to think more about this story, and the truths that it has for us. *[pause]*

First...

I. Being family with Christ isn’t based on bloodlines.

Let’s consider what being family with someone entails...

It’s a picture of closeness, intimacy, relationship, and care.

And typically you give preference to your family. *[pause]*

So now this is helpful for us as we think about what Jesus is showing us...

Who are the people that are close to Christ?

² Later on in Acts 1:14 we see that His mother and brothers are disciples, so things changed for them over time.

Who are the people that have an intimate relationship with Him?

Who are the people that He cares deeply for as a family member? *[pauseeee]*

If Jesus never said what He said here, but went out immediately to His earthly family, what would be the implication?

It would feel like you could never get super close to Jesus, unless you were related by blood. *[pause]*

If Jesus said, “Sorry guys, gotta go. My family wants to talk,” it would communicate so much.

It would be saying to His disciples, “You guys can never get as close to me as my earthly family.

You guys are second fiddle, not as important.” *[pause]*

But because He points out that His family is right in front of Him (those who do the will of the Father), He shows us that He values every disciple of His!

He doesn't ignore us because we aren't a part of His bloodline.

No, He cares about us, and sees us as family! *[pauseeeee]*

You know how sometimes people will say, “Blood is thicker than water.”?

They are saying that their bloodline family ties are stronger than any other relationship they may have.

Well would Jesus agree with that statement? *[pause]*

No, He wouldn't.

Blood may be thicker than water, but faith is more important than blood.

For Jesus just said that his family were the ones who do the will of the Father. *[pauseeee]*

Jesus wants us to know that our relationship with Him isn't based on physical descent.

No one could think, “I am physically related to Jesus, so that automatically puts me in.” *[pause]*

It doesn't work like that.

Being family with Christ is not based on your bloodline. *[pause]*

This applies even today.

There are some who think that they are a Christian based on whether they were born into a Christian family. *[pause]*

That's not how it works.

You aren't a Christian due to your parents or grandparents being Christians.

Being a part of Christ's family has nothing to do with your family tree. *[pause]*

You may be blessed to hear the Gospel from your Christian parents, but having Christian parents doesn't automatically make you a Christian.

The faith of your family doesn't cover you.

Just because you have a certain last name doesn't mean that Jesus is going to say, "Oh wow, you're a Martin? You are good to go." *[pause]*

No, it is those who do the will of the Father, and the will of the Father starts with believing in Christ!³ *[pause]*

The Pharisees showed themselves definitely not to be a part of the family of Christ, for they had rejected Him.

They *weren't* doing the will of the Father, in fact, they could only truly know the Father through Christ.

No, to do the will of the Father, you must truly know and believe in Him.

You must obey God by following Christ. *[pauseeee]*

You see, following after Christ is the mark of being in His family.

It's not just going through the routines, never really seeking to love and follow Christ.

For what did God say of Jesus? "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; *listen to him.*"⁴

That's the will of the Father!

So if you reject Christ, and don't seek to obey His commands, you are not a part of His family. *[pauseeee]*

The Pharisees were prime examples of this.

They thought they were good based on their bloodline and works, but they had rejected Christ. *[pause]*

Were they really doing the will of the Father?

³ See John 6:40.

⁴ Matthew 17:5 (italics is mine).

Of course not, so they were not a part of the family. *[pauseeee]*

Some professing Christians don't even think much about Christ, or care about following Him with their lives, yet they claim membership in His family.

But your parents' faith doesn't cover you.

Your church attendance doesn't cover you.

No, you are a part of the family of Christ, if you have trusted in Him by faith.

It's then that you are doing the will of the Father. *[pauseeee]*

Being family with Christ isn't based on our bloodline.

Doesn't that show the love of the Savior? *[pause]*

Here is the Savior, Lord, and Son of God.

He could have come and could have done His duty to save us in a detached way.

But He comes and calls us who follow Him, "brother and sister and mother"!

He isn't ashamed to call us family! *[pause]*

There may be some people in our families, who we may be ashamed to say we are related to, but Christ is never ashamed of anyone in His family. *[pause]*

Or maybe for you, your family is ashamed to call you family, but guess what?

If you have trusted in Christ, you never have to worry about Christ not calling you brother or sister. *[pauseeee]*

Though Christ is better than the Temple, Lord of the Sabbath, the great Healer, who is better than Jonah and Solomon.

Though He is the great Son of Man and Servant of God, and hope of the nations...

...He reaches out to the needy and says, "I'm not ashamed to call you brother...I'm not ashamed to call you sister."⁵ *[pause]*

There isn't a barrier put up that we can never cross to get close to Him, for the invitation to be a part of His family is for *whoever* does the will of the Father. *[pause]*

There isn't only certain people allowed to have "special access" to Jesus, as we stand in the outer court.

⁵ See Hebrews 2:11.

No, if you simply look to Christ in faith and follow Him, you are His.

And this means that we can have closeness and intimacy with Christ as a family member would. *[pauseeee]*

Some people approach Christ with hesitancy and are somewhat standoffish.

They don't think about how Jesus wasn't ashamed to call us brother and friend, and as a result, they never feel close to Christ. *[pauseee]*

Yes, we approach Him, remembering that He is Savior and Lord, and so we come with a respectful, submissive mentality, but He is also our Brother and Friend.

And that means that we can be close to Him. *[pauseeee]*

When you are going through the hardest trials of your life, it's comforting to know that He is Lord of all and in control...

...But it's also comforting to remember that He is our Brother, who puts His arm around us and comforts us with His presence. *[pauseeee]*

Being family with Christ isn't based on bloodlines, but we also see that...

II. Being family with Christ takes precedence over earthly ties.

Here is Jesus' earthly, physical family vying for his attention, yet He points out that His family is actually the ones who do the will of the Father.

So He was demonstrating that His earthly family didn't take priority over His true, spiritual family. *[pauseeee]*

It seems as though Christ's earthly family may have wanted to dissuade Him from continuing to poke the Pharisees, and saying such provocative things.

But Jesus couldn't prioritize them so highly that they deterred Him from doing the will of His Father.

And so He was doing what He taught: loving God over family.⁶ *[pause]*

This didn't mean that He dishonored His family, for He taught others to honor their parents and showed honor *to* His parents.⁷

But His priority was to His Father and His true spiritual family, not His earthly family.

⁶ See Matthew 10:37.

⁷ See Matthew 15:1-9, 19:19, & John 19:27.

And this is because our relationship with our Father in Heaven and the family that we belong to is an eternal bond, united under the Fatherhood of God Himself. *[pauseee]*

Many wonder how missionaries could leave their earthly families to go overseas.

It's not that they hate their families, of course not.

But they also realize that following God is most important, and they must follow God's calling. *[pauseee]*

You see, the most important thing that any family can do is *not* to put itself first, but to put God first.

Your earthly family is not the end all, but your family is to be shaped by God Himself. *[pauseee]*

I've heard of people who do not attend church because they say that Sunday is their family day.

But their priorities are showing, and God is below their family, and their spiritual family is below their earthly family.

Yes, Sunday is family time, you're right, and your family is here. *[pauseee]*

Of course, we have responsibilities in our earthly families, and we should do those responsibilities well.

But we must not act like our church family is not family at all. *[pauseeee]*

I've also heard of earthly families who team up to use their power to control churches and end up dividing them.

That's a shame!

They are putting their earthly ties first to the detriment of the family of God! *[pauseee]*

Do you neglect your spiritual family in favor of your earthly family?

Remember this passage.

Earthly families should look outwards to how they can love and emphasize their spiritual family. *[pauseee]*

That leads me to point 3...

III. Being family with Christ should strengthen our church's bond.

There were a couple times that I watched this show called, "Undercover Boss".

In the show, the CEO of a big company would go undercover and act like a normal employee, working alongside other lower level employees. *[pause]*

By the end of the show, it was revealed to the workers that they had been working with their boss the whole time. *[pause]*

What was interesting is that some employees would treat their undercover boss in mean ways, but once they found out that it was their boss, they acted differently towards them. *[pause]*

This is because in many ways, how we think about someone influences how we treat them. *[pause]*

If we see someone as just a coworker, we are more OK with being distant to them emotionally.

But if we see someone as a family member, we are more prone to be close to them, and treat them as family. *[pause]*

So also, this is what can happen in church.

How we think about those in our church will influence how close we are to them. *[pause]*

So my question for you is this -- how do you view others in this church? *[pauseeee]*

I find that so often we view others in the church in a distant way.

We may view them more like co-workers, acquaintances, or just fellow volunteers in a club.

We have a low, incorrect view of our fellow believers, and this leads us to act towards them in detached ways. *[pause]*

When they struggle, our hearts don't go out to them as much as they should.

We aren't as close to them as we should, but act like we are acquaintances. *[pause]*

But what is the implication of Christ's statements here?

If we are brothers and sisters of Christ, then we are brothers and sisters *of each other!* *[pause]*

This truth is reiterated throughout the New Testament, reminding us to love one another with brotherly affection, and telling us that we are all a part of the household of faith.⁸ *[pauseeee]*

In Christ, we are brothers and sisters, do you remember that? *[pause]*

It's so easy to forget that truth.

I've found myself saying before of someone, "It seems like he has no family left."

But I was wrong.

If that person is a Christian, *they have family.*

⁸ A reference to Ephesians 2:19 & Galatians 6:10.

For no Christian can truly say, “I have no family,” even if they have no earthly surviving relatives, for their family is those in the church. *[pauseeee]*

What a wonderful thing to remember!

When the church is acting as it should, there shouldn't ever be a lonely Christian in its midst.

When the church is acting as a family, no Christian in its body should feel unloved and disregarded.

We are a family! *[pauseeee]*

You see, the first step to strengthening our church family bond is to remember that we are family. *[pause]*

You can't grow closer together, if you consider yourselves simply fellow volunteers or fellow residents of Clearfield.

So continually remind yourself, “This is my brother or sister in Christ.”

Or remind yourself, “This is my church *family*.”

And the more you do that, the more your appreciation and feeling of closeness grows. *[pauseeee]*

What else can we do to strengthen our bond as a family? *[pause]*

Well how do earthly families do it?

They spend time together, don't they?

They show love to one another, and care for each other.

They share joys and sorrows, burdens and blessings.

They cry on each other's shoulders, and rejoice in each other's joys.⁹ *[pause]*

So don't be too embarrassed to share the concerns and aches of your heart with others, for we are here to comfort and encourage you like a family.

Don't hold back the joys and delights of your heart with others, for we want to rejoice with you! *[pause]*

Spend time with others in the church family, or call someone up in the church and talk about these things.

When we ask for testimonies, share with us what's going on in your life.

⁹ See Romans 12:15.

That's what family does! *[pause]*

When we spend time with each other, show love and care, and open up our hearts with each other, our family bond will only strengthen.

So let's keep reminding ourselves: we are brothers and sisters in Christ, and that means that we are family. *[pause]*

You see, Christ is teaching us that...

Our true family is found with Christ and with those who follow Him!

You know, we each could come up with a million reasons why Christ would be ashamed to call us family.

We could list our sins out, we could rattle off our failures, and point to our weaknesses.

If it was up to us, we would probably each say, "Christ *shouldn't* call me a brother or sister, I'm an embarrassment."

But praise the Lord that our own righteousness isn't the way into the family! *[pause]*

What does Scripture say? "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."¹⁰ *[pause]*

How is it possible that we could be called a part of Christ's family? Because it's by grace through faith in Jesus! *[pause]*

Since Jesus humbly came to this earth by taking on flesh, and was made like us, He showed that He was not ashamed to call us brothers.¹¹

But being made like us, yet without sin, He went to the Cross and died in our place to make us holy and make us children of God by faith in Him.

What love of God "that we should be called children of God; and so we are"¹²

He has caused us to be born again into the family of God, and that means we are co-heirs with Christ and will someday be glorified with him!¹³ *[pauseeee]*

You see, in love, Christ didn't keep up at arm's length because of our sins, failures, and weaknesses, but drew near to us in the Incarnation and died for those very sins so that we could be children of God.

¹⁰ John 1:12.

¹¹ A reference to Hebrews 2:11.

¹² 1 John 3:1.

¹³ A reference to Romans 8:16-17.

And that means that if you trust in Christ, even now Christ doesn't keep you at arm's length because of your sins, failures, and weaknesses, but draws near to you and joyfully calls you a part of His family.

He doesn't disregard you because you are struggling in life, for He doesn't break the bruised reed or quench the smoldering wick! *[pauseee]*

Though you may be treated horribly by your earthly family, you can know that you have a true family in Christ.

Though you are rejected and disregarded by your parents, siblings, or relatives -- know that Christ stretches out his hand towards you and says, "This is my brother." Or, "This is my sister."
[pause]

What an honor and a privilege to be brothers and sisters of Christ.