



The Anglican Parish of Whangaparaoa Peninsula
3 Stanmore Bay Road,
Whangaparaoa, Auckland, N.Z.
www.ststephenswgp.org.nz

Sermon

Family and God's Family

Matthew 12:46-50

27th March 2022

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There is no way that I, a mere male, can understand in all its fullness what it is to be a mother. That is why I have asked Gill/Lorraine to speak. They know what I can never know. I can get a little closer by listening very clearly when Lorraine tries to describe to me what motherhood means.

Of course, I have an abundance of evidence that will help me enter into their world. I have watched Lorraine and the sacrifices she made for our two children. I have seen also the way in which she has given all she has in raising them.

I am also privileged to have my own Mother as an example. After Dad died, she raised us from our early teens on her own. She was a wonderful Mother Grandmother and Mother-in-Law.

All of this leads me to feeling a little stunned when I hear Our Lord saying that we are His brothers and sisters and mothers. What can He mean? How would His Mother have felt?

Mark helps us out here when in his telling of this story he tells us that the family heard what Jesus was doing and the controversy He was stirring up. Mark tells us they thought He was "out of His mind." They had no way of seeing who He is yet. They will later, and we are told by Luke that there will come a time when Mary will have a sword pierce her heart also. (Luke 2: 35b.)

Rather than diminishing His family He is lifting each of us up to the same degree of intimacy. He is telling them and us that the new community that will be born out of His ministry will be like having everyone who is a member of the Kingdom of God as a brother sister mother father or any other family member we can mention.

Of course, His earthly family will not understand that until after the Cross and Resurrection, yet that is what He is saying to all listening at that moment.

What this says to us is that no matter what we believe constitutes a family, it has as one of its main purposes to reflect the quality of relationship between the members of the Trinity.

I read somewhere that the best thing that a father can do for his children is to love their mother. Our Kids expect it of us. Our two insist that the words "Mum and Dad" are really only one word, mumanddad. To them the two have become one. Listen to St Paul, "For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom

every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.....” Now, remember that the name is supposed to describe the character of the person or group.

That is why the Church throughout its history has given the family such a high place in its thinking. It is supposed to be a microcosm of the Kingdom.

Now let me take this a step further. The Church is also the family of God. It too has the task of reflecting to the world around it what God is truly like. We are supposed to be known for the love we have for one another. I highly recommend getting out a concordance (You may have one in the back of your Bible) and looking up the words “one another.” It will tell you how we are to treat one another.

That means that if anyone wants to know what God is like, all that they need to do is visit a local church and they will find out. That is why one theologian says that the local Church is the best hermeneutic of the Gospel, which is a technical way of saying the local Church EXPLAINS the Gospel.

Now if you have stayed with me so far you may be looking at your family and/or your local congregation in despair! We are all a million miles away from that standard. And you would be right! We are!

But this is where we are headed. This is the vision that guides our journey. These are the heights we are to scale. The road will be hard. The wounds we receive will be deep. The cost we pay will be high. “A word will pierce your soul also.” If you love like this a cross awaits you before you receive a crown.

But consider, what is the alternative? Listen again to C. S. Lewis, “To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it around carefully with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable and irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy, or at least the risk of tragedy, is damnation. The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbation of love is Hell.”

Mothers took the risk of giving us birth. They raised us despite the cost to them, and it was high. Sometimes the pain, God forgive us, was caused by us. Yet they gave and went on giving, and whether they knew it or not were in their own small way reflecting the face of God “from whom all families in Heaven and earth derive their name.”

That’s why we honour them in this small way today.