

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

June 9, 2024



FAMILY

expanding the network

by Drew Downs

This week we get to see family in new terms. Jesus knows it means blood and origins and where we come from. At least in so far as we make that the important thing.

We also know it to be more than that. And we now have a phrase for this bigger vision: chosen family. Which means we recognize the idea of family needs to be bigger. Because the nuclear family is too small, and ultimately, a pretty new invention.

This different orientation has been part of the faith from the beginning. We speak of one another as siblings in Christ and as children of God. But the orientation feels difficult to treat as “real”. We long to speak of the closeness that is part of relationships, but feel tied to a boundary Jesus himself breaks.

It takes courage to expand our sense of family. To see so many others on this common journey are our closest siblings.

ORDINARY TIME

2024

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Another Triennium

This summer, The Episcopal Church will gather for its General Convention, the largest regular gathering of a denomination in the country. And because it only happens every three years, it always feels big.

Of course, we also have big decisions to make and big conversations, with big worship and big voices discussing big priorities and big challenges. And when we have to elect a new presiding bishop to fill the big shoes of Michael Curry, well...it is a pretty big deal.

And yet, I was recently reminded of how little any of this effects us. And this sets up an interesting dichotomy. And one we often have when the wider church makes national headlines. *What do we do with this?*

As big as people make generational decisions, like prayer book revision, women's ordination, and equal marriage, these have outsized attention at first as they gradually become normal. And the main reason they become normal is that we work through it. Those that choose to, that is.

Most of our work has little to do with General Convention, the diocese, or even what we do in vestry. It starts with how we treat each other. The rest of this ends up mostly an academic exercise compared with the way we connect with other people in our community. And choose to connect beyond it.

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

2024

FOR SUNDAY

Proper 5B

June 9, 2024

Collect

O God, from whom all good proceeds: Grant that by your inspiration we may think those things that are right, and by your merciful guiding may do them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

Mark 3:20-35

The crowd came together again, so that Jesus and his disciples 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." And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.

"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."

ORDINARY TIME

Reflection

This is a remarkable encounter we're reading about this week. It starts a little before this, when the crowds following Jesus become *multitudes*—a word that will come back to us later when Jesus feeds them. But here, the crowds are too much. Too many people and Jesus can't get around. They are quite literally restricting Jesus's ability to do stuff.

We should see this literally and metaphorically, of course. The physical danger and restriction is a threat to Jesus and to his ministry—which also reflects on his ability to share the dream of God with humanity.

He puts water between himself and the multitudes—to give that room. To save and to open. Then, when he comes home, his family sees the crowds and their danger and his mother can't help herself. She wants to protect him!

Jesus offers an important corrective for us and our own need to protect and horde Jesus for ourselves; and also to see families as more important than the dream of God. Which is probably the most difficult part to hear.

There is tragic beauty in this story for those willing to hear it and receive it. That, for God to be first, it means families are always, at most, second. Safety is, at most, second. Our own desires and ambitions are, at most, second.

We know this conviction better in name than practice. In practice we like to attribute this arrangement to our own lives—and still saying "family comes first."

But there is a more fascinating truth—that Jesus doesn't disown his family. He extends that high esteem to everyone on board for this epic journey. It could yet be true of these who know him as son and brother.

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