

So many of you don't question who your father is. All the birth records tell you plus he was there as you were growing up. He provided and cared for you. He made sure you had what you needed to survive. He was dad, pop, father. But even if you don't know anyone you wouldn't have to look far before coming across someone who doesn't know their father. Probably even some here this morning. They obviously have a father but he either died early or abandoned them long ago. Growing up for them there was no father in the house. No one doing the things dads do.

People who know their father just can't understand those who don't, its two different worlds. Anything dad did while you were growing up you either knew because he was around or didn't know because he wasn't. He either saw you graduate or didn't. He either watched you score the goal or didn't. Whether your earthly father was in the picture or not something about fathers does bring us all together. All of us have a heavenly Father. Some know that and others don't. People who don't also don't understand. They can't see him so he doesn't exist. They don't know what he does for them so he isn't real. They have no idea about anything he says or does and they don't care. They're lost to the Father's family.

Jesus addresses family in the gospel this Father's Day morning...

You are the heavenly Father's real family
See his victory
Understand his mission

Years ago there was a game show on television called Family Feud. Five members of a family would try and guess what 100 people responded to questions. When the guessing family got three wrong the other team got one chance. The host asked the first four members of the family for one answer. Then the lead member of the family had to decide which of those answers to give officially or go it alone. Everyone worked together to try and get the best answer. Certainly no one on the family would be shouting out an answer they knew was wrong. That wouldn't win the game and it'd be working against the family.

The religious leaders had witnessed Jesus do miracles like casting out demons, curing blindness, and healing paralysis. Still they accused Jesus saying, **"He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons."** Now Beelzebub was their way of saying Jesus was in cahoots with Satan. They were saying Jesus and Satan were on the same team. But then why would Jesus be casting out demons who worked for Satan? **"How can Satan drive out Satan?"** It wouldn't make sense. Plus the religious leaders were mistaken. Jesus' miracles weren't a sign of Satan. His miracles showed his power and victory over Satan.

Satan was being treated like the big strong owner of a house being robbed. Inside Satan's house are his possessions, those people who are unbelievers heading to hell. You might say unbelievers are Satan's family. At one point in time all people, even you and I, were in there. Satan is strong and doesn't easily let go of his family. **"No one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house."** Satan's house was being robbed because unbelievers were already hearing the gospel and coming to faith. The victory wasn't even complete, but it was only a matter of time. Jesus would ascend the cross, tie up Satan in defeat, and give up his life. With Satan defeated, Jesus could enter Satan's house and take his possessions. Unbelievers would become believers, family members of Satan would become the heavenly Father's real family by seeing his victory.

Being a part of a family on earth is really important. You know when someone doesn't have a strong family life. Growing up with an awful family can lead to plenty of problems later in life. Fathers who regularly abuse their children are without even realizing it training the next generation of abusers. Certainly the abuse someone suffers at the hand of their father is sinful, but the reactions that so often unfortunately come from that abuse are just as sinful. A house without rules can open the door to unruly kids who only grow to be worse unruly kids. And lazy fathers who don't do anything not only are sinning but they're setting an example for their children that will probably cause them to fall into sin as well. Our parents not only pass along sin from birth, but our family can reinforce and keep us in our sinful ways.

No matter what your family life was or is like, you have a better family. You're part of the heavenly Father's real family because of the victory won for you by Christ Jesus over Satan. Jesus claims you as his own, recuing you from the family of unbelievers and giving you his victory. You are part of the family of believers. Jesus doesn't fight Satan from within like the religious leaders believed. He's outside of Satan's house fighting and winning the victory. His death proves his victory is total. His resurrection shows he still has the power even to rise from the dead. Satan is defeated. The strong man has been tied up. See Jesus' victory.

If mom is ready to go off to the spa, dad is ready to go off to the golf course, and the kids are ready to go off to the rides then no one is really united on the plan. They're still family but the different directions don't show unity. A plan would be good, one where some get what they want now and others later. The mission for the family needs to come together. Jesus won the victory over Satan. But there are those that don't understand what that means for them. Not only do we want to see the victory as members of this family of the Lord but we also want to understand the mission.

If you hadn't eaten in a few days and weren't sleeping I suppose your family would probably come and try to help. They would do whatever they could to help even if it meant forcing you to eat or sleep. Jesus' mother and brothers said, **"He is out of his mind."** They were thinking about Jesus' health and well being. They loved him and didn't want to see him suffer. They thought the crowds were keeping their family member from living a healthy life so they wanted to stop the cycle. They stood outside calling for Jesus to come out. But they didn't understand his mission. They couldn't see why Jesus had to keep preaching and teaching, or understand why Jesus valued doing ministry more than eating lunch. They thought only of this earthly life. That's all they could see. Jesus saw more.

Jesus addressed who was part of his real family. Blood didn't do it. Mary, his mother, was blood relation. His brothers were closely related. But none of those relationships made them true members of Christ's family. **"Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.'"** Those that believed in him as the Savior, they were part of the heavenly Father's real family. They understood the mission. People were dying in their sins and only Jesus could do something about that. Real family needed to understand his mission if they were going to call themselves family.

Sit in the circle around Jesus; don't stand on the outside looking in. Those looking in misunderstand the mission. They think it's all about taking care of things inside and around the church. They think the mission is all about maintaining or stabilizing. They think the mission is all about comfort and good feelings. It's all about calling yourself a Christian and then receiving good jobs, good money, or a good life. It's misunderstanding the mission.

Jesus clarifies the mission by clarifying who belongs to him and his family. We can't just say we're part of the family. Being a part means doing the will of God. That will isn't something we can do alone. The Holy Spirit works in us the faith to believe the message about Christ. That's the will of God, believe in Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Those seated closest, those gathering around him to hear his Word and partake of the Sacraments are part of the family. They understand the mission is to save people by the gospel and they long to hear that gospel themselves.

You are the heavenly Father's real family. By Christ Jesus you belong to him. But that family is ever growing. Its members are here in the United States and clear across the globe in China. Its members are from north and south, east and west. Its members are young and old and in between. And through Christ's victory and him laying out the mission you are part of that growth. You have been brought in so you can go out. Go out to take the same gospel message that made you a part of the family and share it with others. Then they too can be a part of the heavenly Father's real family.