

CHILDREN OF THE HEAVENLY FATHER

Are concerned about the Heavenly Father's will, and
Are children by the adoption that comes through faith in the Heavenly Father's Son.

Matthew 12:46-50

TEXT: *While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

It's hard to overlook the value of family. During the holidays the media are flooded with stories that tug at the heartstrings of all as we watch them teach us how important and special it is to have FAMILY. There's that famous movie, *It's a Wonderful Life* with Jimmy Stewart. For the last several years, one TV channel has offered us 24 hours of the movie *Christmas Story*, the story of a young boy in the early 1950's whose only desire is that he should receive a Daisy-brand Red Ryder BB Gun for Christmas. A very funny movie was *Trains and Boats and Planes* starring Steve Martin and the late John Candy. Its plot is the humorous, yet poignant story of two salesmen trying to get home for Thanksgiving Day. Humor abounds as they encounter all kinds of weird obstacles. The emotional pain surges, however, when John Candy's character reveals that he has no family to go home to.

We watch this stuff and are moved to go hug the kids, or give Mom and Dad a call.

It's this sort of emotional sentimentality that makes us believe that somewhere in the Scripture there is that infamous passage: BLOOD IS THICKER THAN WATER. And if that is not a Bible passage, then it ought to be! It's the kind of sentimentality that causes moms and dads, even grandpas and grandmas, rise to the defense of sons and daughters who might even live their lives contrary to the ways and mores of society. The rationale is this: They may be wrong, but they're family.

While this sounds noble, and even godly, it's false. It's heresy. In fact, Jesus Himself did not follow the doctrine of BLOOD IS THICKER THAN WATER, because that is false doctrine. Before us is the truth about family relationship. The most solid, enduring, eternal and God-pleasing family relationship is to be CHILDREN OF THE HEAVENLY FATHER. And what does this mean? Children of the Heavenly Father are concerned about the Heavenly Father's will; and are children by the adoption that comes through faith in the Heavenly Father's Son.

What were the concerns of Jesus' mother and brothers and sisters on that day that is recorded for us by the inspired account of Matthew? Matthew simply says: *While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you."* They were waiting... They wanted to speak to him about something obviously important. That they would send a message in surely implies that they were not privileged in any way, except through a messenger. They weren't "in the front row." (Why not?) Luke, who was a medical doctor, adds this inspired piece of information: *...they were not able to get near him because of the crowd...* Lu 8. This would imply that they were upset because of the crowds and the hectic schedule that was pressing upon her dear son, Jesus, the Son of God. After all, mother Mary was given the divine responsibility to care for this Immanuel "God with us."

Jesus' answer seems harsh at first, and even unscriptural: *He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.* While there are human relationships that God has ordained for life on this earth, the first and foremost is every person's own personal relationship with God, the Father: *whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother...* This statement seems to imply that his family is NOT doing the will of his Heavenly Father!

All of Jesus' life was spent in perfect obedience to God and to his parents. But now, the child/parent relationship that God ordained for the raising of children was changed. It was changed by God the Father Himself when at Jesus' baptism the Heavenly Father's voice declared: *This is my Son whom I love. With Him I am well-pleased...* Jesus had been publicly ordained by the Heavenly Father as the Lord's Christ. While this

calling is clear, Jesus' own family are having problems with it. They are not happy with how he is spending so much time in this work.

This illustrates to us how important it is for us to elevate the God's Word to the highest priority in our lives. Because as life changes around us, one thing does not change: God's Will as He has clearly revealed it in His written Word. Life changes for us: a child grows up and gets married. God's Word says: ***For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*** Ge 2 Fathers and mothers must learn what this means. It means that their married children have left to start their own families. The relationship has changed. But let it never be that their children who leave to begin their own families have not left their Heavenly Father! Have you taught them to elevate God's Word and Sacrament, the worship that our Lord demands in being a true disciple, and faithful obedience to all of God's commandments above all of this world's other activities? Do you urge them to be faithful to worship and God's Word?

Even Jesus' own mother, his brothers and sisters, show that they desperately need what Jesus was preaching to all who would listen. They stand outside gritching and seem to have no understanding of the great purpose for which the Christ was sent. They have no regard for Jesus' ministry on this day and have forgotten that ***God wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.***

They may say: "blood is thicker than water," but the water that makes the ink that fills the pages of Scripture is, as Paul writes: ***... the gospel ... is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes ... For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."*** Ro 1

Jesus wasn't disowning his own family when he said these words. Instead He reminds us of the greater family to which all belong through faith in His Name. Jesus would walk into this congregation today and wave His arm over all of you and say the same thing: ***Here are my mother and my brothers.*** For there is a blood that is not only thicker than water, but thicker and more powerful than Satan himself.

That blood of Jesus, shed on the cross is the blood of God Himself. The demonstration of Christ's crucifixion stands as the public testimony that God has paid for sin. Therefore, if you believe God and Jesus the Son of God, you can say to Satan: "You tell me that I have sinned and deserve to go to hell with you... You are correct! For you have even led me to commit many sins in your name! But I will believe what God has revealed in His Sacred Word. His will is that I believe Him and be saved. So, get behind me, Satan, with your accusations, for I will put my faith and trust in God."

And then, consider the power of the water of Holy Baptism! God has made that water thicker and more powerful than any other relationship on earth! For what is written for us to know and believe is what is written in Paul's letter to Titus: ***God our Savior ... saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good.*** Titus 3 Stress these things! Urge your blood relatives never to neglect Holy Baptism! Urge them to remember daily what God has done for us in this blessed water of life that lays claim to our infants even before they can understand our language!

Then there is that blood of Jesus, shed on the cross 2000 years ago, that still comes to God's family of believers in the miracle of the Lord's Supper. For it is Jesus Himself who has commanded us to eat the bread and drink the wine of Holy Communion, and has given us this promise: ***This is my body; this is my blood, given and shed for YOU for the forgiveness of sins...*** And the Apostle has taught us to call this a Holy Communion, which means fellowship. For not only are we united with Jesus who comes to His children in this most wonderful fashion, we are united to one another as one body, a family under God. For Paul also writes: ***Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.*** 1 Co 10 Here, at the table of the Lord's Supper, kneels the family of God, children of the Heavenly Father through Jesus, His Son.

Here the Lord Jesus looks down and declares: ***Here are my mother and my brothers.*** Amen.