

Family Ties
Luke 8:19-21

Before moving up to Camp our family lived in a subdivision near Lake Orion. It was one of those little, quiet communities where neighbors knew neighbors 4, 5, and 6 houses on each side of your own house and across the street. Kids hung out into the evening playing kick the can or hide and seek using several yards and neighbors didn't care if you hid in their bushes to avoid being "it". We rode our bikes up and down the street and in the winter when it was icy we took our sleds to the top of the road that led down to the lake so we could race out onto the lake, reminiscent of that scene in "It's a Wonderful Life", except no one fell through the ice.

On one particular summer day a bunch of kids headed down to the Pump house. It wasn't a big building and neither was it very high. The roof was flat and one side of the building had dirt piled against it making it easy to climb onto the roof. Kids would go there and play dodge ball. Those on the ground tried to hit those on the roof. My twin brother and I went too. I'm sure it was his idea. I don't recall if we were supposed to stay in the yard or if we were supposed to be back at a certain time, but after a while Mom walked down to get us. What you need to understand is that Mom was 6 ½ or 7 months pregnant. She was sick and she was not happy. We were told to wait until Dad got home. Let's just say that the board of education was applied to the seat of knowledge that day.

Take your Bible and turn with me to Luke 8 for a similar story with a different ending.
Luke 8:19-21

Matthew and Mark both put this event before the teaching on the four soils, but Luke puts it in the same teaching sequence because the theme of these three passages we have considered fit together in a logical way to support what Luke wants to convey.

From verses 4-15 we learned that we need to hear and receive the Word.

From verses 16-18 we learned about the need to hear and share the Word.

Now in verses 19-21 we going to learn about our need to hear and obey the Word.

So Luke puts them in logical order to teach three important truths about the Word of God.

From this passage let's consider together two points.

Jesus is challenged – v. 19-20

Jesus' challenge – v. 21

I. JESUS IS CHALLENGED – v. 19-20

Maybe you have had a similar experience. Maybe you can recall a time when your Mom or Dad had to come after you for something you had done. Jesus had left the family business some time ago and had been on the road in ministry. Assuming Jesus is around Capernaum where His base of ministry operation was and His mother, Mary, was still living in Nazareth, it was about 30 miles apart. A lot further than the ¼ mile my Mom had to walk to get my brother and me.

Turn back to Mark 3 where we get a better clue as to why she traveled to get Jesus to come back with her. We find her actions are driven for two reasons.
Mark 3:20-22

If we have learned anything about Jesus, crowds followed Him everywhere He went. In this case there were so many people pressing around Him and we can assume so many demands for His time being asked of Him that He and the disciples couldn't even eat.

I love that commercial where a man is asking a woman about certain features of a phone plan and as the camera pans back you realize they aren't in the store, they're in the food court and she's trying to eat.

Jesus was pressed all the time to do and teach, do and teach. And here they couldn't even eat. We see in verse 21 of Mark 3 the first reason Mary came to find Jesus. Look at the verse: "When His family heard about this, they went to take charge of Him, for they said, 'He is out of His mind.'"

How they heard we don't know and we aren't even really sure where they were at when they heard the news about what was going on with Jesus. Today you can instant message, send a text, put a blog out on Facebook and the news goes viral. Back then it was all word of mouth. Somehow Mary and His brothers heard that Jesus was so busy He couldn't even take care of his personal needs. Like the verse says, they thought He was crazy, out of His mind. They immediately left what they were doing and where they were at to go take charge of Him. He's 30+ years old and they didn't think He could take care of Himself or that He knew what He was doing. Mark uses a word that literally means they went to arrest Him. His ceaseless activity of ministry prevented Him from properly caring for His needs, let alone the needs of those who were with Him. As one author notes about Jesus, people thought He was a mentally unbalanced religious fanatic.

Interestingly it is the same thing Festus said about Paul, that he was out of his mind.

When D.L. Moody was alive, many in Chicago called him "Crazy Moody" because of his zeal for the Lord. Warren Wiersbe attests that "history reveals that God's servants are usually misjudged by their contemporaries, and often misunderstood by their families.

People thought He was crazy and Mary went to take Him away from that frenetic pace.

But there is a second reason revealed by Mark as to why His family came to rescue Him from Himself. We find it in Mark 3:22.

The religious leaders had come down from Jerusalem and were making false accusations about Jesus. They claimed that He was able to drive out demons because He was possessed by the prince of demons.

Now, as you can tell I am not a mother, but I know my Mom and I think I know the heart of most mothers and that is when it comes to their children, they do not like others making personal attacks on them. They immediately jump into defense mode and come to the rescue. My child needs me, and it doesn't matter how old you are. It's an innate characteristic to protect. Mary jumped into action.

Now, turn back to Luke 8 for what Paul Harvey calls the rest of the story. Jesus is ministering at what seems to be break neck speed, His Mother hears about it and brings some of Jesus' brothers along with her. If she can't convince Him to come home with her, it appears that she was ready to use some force to do so. Let's keep in mind as well that even as much as 6 months prior to His crucifixion His siblings did not believe He was the Messiah. John 7:5 "For even His own brothers did not believe in Him."

Think about that for a minute. That to me is astounding. While we don't know the age difference between them, they grew up under the same roof with the same parents, heard the same stories, saw the same evidence but denied that Jesus was the Messiah. It's like following a roadmap to some destination, say, Yellowstone National Park to see Old Faithful, following all the signs that lead you there, pull into the park, get out of your car, walk the trail to where the geyser blows at the time the ranger said it would, then turn away and claim that it doesn't exist.

But they went along with their Mother at her request to "take charge of Him" because He was out of His mind. Our passage says that they arrived to where He was ministering but could not even get

near Him because the crowd was so large. Mary must have been confident that Jesus would stop whatever He was doing to see her because family ties are important. We imagine then that she pulled someone aside and told the person who she was and needed to see Jesus right away. So the person either edged his way through the crowd or passed a note to Jesus or a message was whispered from person to person until it reached Him.

When my brother and I were in college we would on occasion travel home for a weekend to visit. If there was a retreat going on we would eat Sunday dinner and then head out to make the four hour trip back to Grand Rapids. The problem was, especially if it was a lady's retreat, we had to compete with a couple hundred ladies who also wanted to say good bye to her. Mom was not only the cook (one good reason she was well liked), but she also had a very engaging, delightful spirit that drew many to her. We had to stand in line to say good bye. My brother used to joke about how sad it was that her own children had to wait in line to see her.

The roles are reversed but the idea is the same. Mary couldn't get through to get a word to Jesus. She wanted to challenge what He was doing to Himself and what others were saying about Him. It was very concerning to her. Jesus is challenged. But then Jesus responds with His own challenge.

II. JESUS' CHALLENGE – v. 21

Let's just get it right out of the way here and be clear that Jesus is in no way trying to be rude toward Mary and neither is He rejecting the family unit in this statement as if they weren't important. It is meant to highlight that spiritual relationships are of greater importance, relationships that exist with those who believe in Him.

A true family relationship with Jesus exists when by faith we believe in Him as Savior. It is said that

blood is thicker than water. It simply means that family ties are the strongest bond there is. In a spiritual sense we can say that is absolutely true, because there is no stronger or secure bond than the one that exists through the shed blood of Jesus. Faith in Jesus as Savior brings us into a new family relationship that can never be broken, never be severed. And so we sing:

I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God –
I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood!

Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod;
For I'm part of the family, the family of God.

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Jesus said that those who are in true relationship with Him are those who hear God's Word and then put it into practice, those who do it. We talked about the four types of soil and pondered the question about which type of soil we are. We discussed that if we hear the Word we are to share it. Now Jesus is taking it a step further and challenging us to obey the Word of God.

We read in Acts 1:14 that eventually Jesus' brothers get it. They come to understand, accept, and believe that He is the Messiah. We read in that passage that after His ascension, the Apostles along with other believers including Mary and His brothers are in the upstairs room earnestly praying. His half-brother James will go on to write the book that bears His name and have this to say "Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." (James 1:22)

Maybe the event of Luke 8 came to mind as James penned those poignant words. Don't just listen to the Word, do it.

The Message gives some urgency to the intent. "Don't fool yourself into thinking that you are a listener when you are anything but, letting the Word go in one ear and out the other. Act on what you hear!

John 14:15-21

In the closing hours before His arrest as Jesus reclined with the disciples during the Passover meal He brought His three years of teaching to bear in these final instructions. It's a summarization of His teaching neatly wrapped up in some very succinct instruction.

If you love Me, you will obey My commandments. It couldn't be any simpler. It couldn't be any clearer.

If we say we are part of Jesus' family, obey His commands. And when we obey His commands He will reveal more of Himself to us.

Stop and ponder that for a moment. Let that thought sink deep into your noodle. Think about the possibilities of what that means, the change that can take place, the change that will take place if we, who say we love Jesus, obey what He says. We could spend a month of Sundays on this and not even begin to scratch the surface.

Consider just some of the one another passages and let's ask ourselves if we are obeying them.

Love one another.

Serve one another.

Forgive one another.

Help one another.

Care for one another.

Be devoted to one another.

Accept one another.

Strengthen one another.

Submit to one another.

Be patient with one another.

Confess to one another.

Live in harmony with one another.

Don't slander one another.

Instruct one another.

Spur one another on to love and good works.

Admonish one another.

Be humble toward one another in love.

Meet with one another regularly.

Do not anger one another.

Don't lie to one another.

Comfort one another.

Carry one another's burdens.

Live in peace with one another.

You get the picture. But the point is or the question maybe should be: If we were to be honest with ourselves how are we doing? Jesus challenges us to practice the Word of God. Obedience demonstrates that we love Him. *Let me be clear that obedience is not duty, it is devotion.* Duty speaks of legalism, doing it because we have to. Devotion speaks of adoration, doing it because we want to.

I think it's safe to say that it is God's will that we obey the Word. Would you agree with that? I mean I don't think He's saying that it's okay with Him if we choose not to. I think it really matters to Him whether or not we obey. When I ask David to do something, it matters to me that he does it. If I tell him to pick up some of his things and put them away you can bet your bottom dollar if he doesn't do them there are some consequences to disobedience. What makes us think that there won't be consequences for our lack of doing what God says? His will is for us to obey, to practice.

As we close today I want to look at several ideas that are God's will for us, things that He wants us to obey, to practice.

A. It is God's Will That We Are Saved

II Peter 3:9-10

It doesn't matter who we are or what we have done, He wants us to be a part of His forever family so much so that He sent His only Son to die for us. That's how much He loved us. And Scripture appeals us to make that decision to be saved today. Hebrews 3:7-19

You cannot ever hope to obey God if you do not first begin with trusting Jesus as Savior. His will is that you be saved today.

B. It is God's Will That We Be Sanctified

I Thessalonians 4:3

The basic word means to be holy, to be set apart for something that is sacred. "This word can mean a state of being set apart from sin to God, or the process of becoming more dedicated to God." Paul probably means the latter here which if we really boiled it down would include being set apart from sin to God. We call this process progressive sanctification – the idea that each day we are becoming more and more like Christ in character in daily experience. We can spend another month of Sundays talking about what this means and Paul gives some hints to it in this passage. Let me just say here that sanctification is not a process that we can do on our own. Sanctification is the process of the work of God's Spirit in us as we yield more and more of ourselves to His transforming work. Galatians 5:16 "But walk (live) in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

As people of God we are called to be distinct in character from the rest of the world.

II Corinthians 5:17 reminds us that being in Christ we are a new creation and that the old nature has passed away. The Phillips translation says that "the past is finished and gone, everything has become fresh and new."

I Peter 1:13-16

I John 3:2-3

C. It is God's Will That We Serve Others

I Peter 2:15

Philippians 2:3-5

Mark 10:45

John 13:1-6, 15

I think this is one of the most difficult tasks. It is our nature to be prideful and to be selfish, to want others to serve us, after all that is how the world measures success, by how many people serve us.

Jesus measures it in terms of how many people we serve. Are we willing to take up a servant's towel? II Corinthians 4:5 "For we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord and ourselves, your servants, for Jesus sake."

There are so many ways to look at serving others, both believers and non-believers. Paul reminds us in Galatians 6:9-10 that we are to do good unto all men, especially unto those who are of the household of faith. I'm not a doomsdayer by any stretch, but the day may come that because of our faith, public service may not be available, so we're going to have to help one another. But also our service is a way to silence the critics who speak against our faith.

A couple weeks ago I pulled into the Wal-Mart store in Grand Blanc. There was a pregnant woman with the hood of her car up. I sat there a minute debating because I was in a hurry but chose to go see if I could help. She was trying to replace a head light in her car. While the directions in the manual were simple, getting the lamp fixture out was not. After about 10 minutes of working to get it out we concluded that heading to an AutoZone might be her best option, but she was grateful I at least tried.

Is a neighbor coming home from the hospital? Can you carry the books of a classmate who is on crutches? While attending a week long class at Moody I sprained my ankle playing basketball on the first night. My roommate not only took me to the hospital, he carried my books to class all week and helped with my tray at meals.

Ephesians 6:7-8 "Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free."

How can you serve others? It's God's will.

D. It is God's Will That We Be a Living Sacrifice
Romans 12:1-2

This really boils down to surrender, surrender of doing my will to that of doing God's will. It is the lesson that Abraham learned on the mountain when he went to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. Abraham was old. Everything God had promised him was wrapped up in that boy. If he were to die, from a human perspective, Abraham would lose everything he wanted. What to do? My way or God's way?

Paul sums it up nicely for us in his letter to the Romans. "He (Abraham) staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that, what He (God) had promised, He (God) was able also to perform." (Romans 4:20-21)

That, my friends, is absolute surrender of one's will to do the will of God. Have we come to the place where we are willing to surrender what we want in order to do what God wants? Can we become a living sacrifice as an act of worship? It's a matter of absolute surrender. What are you holding onto? What are you unwilling to give up? It's His will.

E. It is God's Will That We Have Spiritual Wisdom and Understanding
Colossians 1:9-14

1. To understand God's plan for us
2. To understand our conduct is to please Christ
3. To understand we are to produce fruit
4. To understand we are to purposefully know God
5. To understand God's power is to strengthen us
6. To understand we are to give God praise

F. It is God's Will That We Are Secure
John 6:35-40
John 10:27-29
Romans 8:37-39

G. It is God's Will That We Spread the Gospel
Matthew 28:19-20

It is God's will that we declare the Gospel and from it disciple others.

Relationships to Christ are not measured by human terms. He bases them on spiritual criteria. Have we obeyed the Word of God? Initially this begins with obedience to accept and believe what He says about our need of a Savior and then once we make that decision to trust Christ, then to live daily lives that obediently follow His will.

Jesus' earthly family came to Him for the wrong reasons, but in time they came to believe He was the Messiah and came to Him for the right reason. When that happened, they didn't have to wait to see Him.

Let me close with one simple question. It's the challenge Jesus gives us to ponder. In hearing the Word of God, are you putting it into practice?