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Do You Have a Personal Relationship with Jesus?



Part 37 (040307AM)

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The most important question you will ever be asked to answer is the question -

"Do You Have a Personal Relationship With Jesus Christ?"

This week as I stood in line buying food to feed 60 hungry servants working at the church, the man behind the counter looked at the tax-exempt paper and said, "Tulsa Bible Church? What do you think of that movie [The Passion]?" I answered (as I am learning to since the awareness of the Name of Jesus, and His death is all around us, more than ever in my lifetime) - "it makes me want to be sure that I have a personal relationship with Him."

(By the way - in my lifetime the name of Jesus has never been so prominent in the news, the media, in print and on the lips of so many people. Historians say that the last time this happened was at the start of Billy Graham's ministry sweeping the country in the late 1940's. So we need to go in with the Gospel while people are open.)

I told him that the movie starts with a verse declaring that Christ was dying for sins. That theme is repeated several times throughout the movie. And so I said, that movie made me examine whether I had a personal relationship with Jesus the One who died for my sins.

Then he said something that I had hoped for, "Am I supposed to have a relationship with Jesus? I am a Catholic, do we do that?" And of course that led to a perfect opportunity to express to him a verbal witness of Christ's death for sin (as the movie starts with and sticks with by the way) and an explanation of how to get that relationship started. Simply stated I shared my testimony that I have a relationship with Jesus Christ by believing that Jesus absorbed God's wrath for my sin on the Cross, and repenting of my sin.

I left him (he was the area manager for a group of Tulsa stores who just happened to be at the counter that moment) reading intently a Gospel tract. So as I asked him, how is YOUR relationship with Jesus? Do you have one? Are you sure of that relationship? Do you understand what that relationship really means to God and to you?

That is what we have come to as we continue in the Gospel by mark this morning. Open with me to Mark 3.31-35, as we stand for the reading of God's Word and prayer.

Mark 3.31-35 Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. 32 And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You." But He answered them, saying, "Who is My mother, or My brothers?" 34 And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! 35 For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother."

First our text reminds us that as believers we sometimes are "STANDING OUTSIDE" of what Jesus is trying to do - aren't we? For just a moment think of what a graphic picture this is.

Jesus' family was standing outside calling Jesus away from his work. They believed they were helping, not hindering. They did not realize how they were blocking Jesus' mission. None of us would consciously block Jesus' efforts, yet we become thoughtless of him when we pursue only our own interests and needs:

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- We desire interesting and uplifting companions. He wants to include the unfortunate, disabled, and sick.
- We desire to get to know those who will help us get ahead. He loves the poor, the disenfranchised, the foreigner.
- We desire to get to know those we enjoy on a more intimate basis. He intends to reach all the people of the world, the millions who as yet still have not heard.
- We desire the comfort of family and selected friends. He desires everyone to be in his family .

Next, our text this morning shows the wonders and the dangers of a relationship with Jesus. The wonders are immense, briefly God offers to each of us and to the entire world the incredible closeness of relationship that would be like growing up in Christ's family as children in a home in Nazareth. We can have the same closeness that James and Jude had, that the disciples had, that Paul, Peter, Daniel, Moses and David had. All simply by faith in HIM.

What Are the Dangers Taught by Jesus in These Verses?

These dangers are immense; we see them in the text. They are the danger of over familiarity with Jesus (that was his mother's problem); the danger of a lack of faith in Jesus Christ (that was his brothers' problem); and trusting in a physical relationship instead of a spiritual relationship (that was both Mary and the brothers' problem).

- **It is dangerous when you think that acquaintance can take the place of experience** . The brothers of Jesus grew up with Him (Matthew 13.55) and they were completely used to being around Him. They just had never personally believed in Him as their sin bearer. They grew up with Him and never received Him.
- That is the danger of church attendance. After a while you can't tell who is really who because everyone is so well acquainted with everything.
- That is the danger of every new generation of children into homes where the parents are believers. Each new generation much personally become sons and daughters of God. God has no grandchildren – His children's children. No we must each receive Him by personal faith into Jesus – not through our parents or friend's faith, but by our faith in His gracious gift.
- Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus? Have you asked Him to absorb the wrath of God against your sins. When God forgives He does so because the righteous requirement for punishment of those sins has been met. Has Jesus taken your sins upon Himself?
- If you are not absolutely sure you are in Christ's family – won't you make sure today? Right where you sit bow your heart before Jesus, lay your own will and way at His crucified feet and say to Him – not my will but Thine be done. I ask for you to take away MY SINS. I believe You gave Yourself for ME. By faith I take your gift of salvation.
- **It is dangerous when you think that you have a physical basis for coming to Jesus**. Mary was Christ's mother, his four named brothers were half-brothers – but no physical relationship by default causes anyone to have a closer place, better access, and so on. No one enters Christ's family by physical birth (like his brothers) but by spiritual birth (those seated around Him). No one is a believer/Christian because they are an American, or because their parents are believers, or because you have always been in church – no it is only if Christ is IN you because you have believed and repented.
- No water baptism can give you a relationship with Jesus. John said, "But to as many as receive Him" (John 1.12)
- No church membership can give you a relationship with Jesus. Paul said, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3.5)
- No amount of good doing can give you a relationship with Jesus. Paul said, "For by grace you have been saved through faith" (Ephesians 2.8-9)

The half brothers of Jesus—James and Jude—both wrote Epistles, and they never mention that Jesus was their half brother. You see, anyone who is in Christ Jesus is closer to Him than His physical mother and His physical brothers were in that day. That is the reason He could look around and say that these "are closer kin to Me than even My mother and My brothers." The important thing is to be rightly related to God in Christ Jesus by having received Him as Savior, which gives us the right of being the sons of God. That is bringing us wonderfully close to Him, my friend .

- **It is dangerous when you become over-familiar with Jesus**. That was Mary's problem and Jesus had to rebuke her for it. And He did so in public. Mary needed to be reminded, just like we do – that Jesus is God the Son. He is Divine, Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Sovereign – and we do not tell Him what to do. We ask Him, seek Him, and knock at His door. They came with their own agenda. Look back at verse 21, remember? That thought He had lost His mind. They were going to 'arrest' Him. Mary needed a reminder that Jesus was always doing His father's will, not hers or anyone else's. We must never presume upon Him. With Jesus may we often say, 'Not my will but THINE be done'.

Mary worship is not in God's Word.

- The immaculate conception ("in the first instance of her conception, by a singular privilege and [grace](#) granted by God, in view of the [merits](#) of [Jesus Christ](#), the Savior of the [human race](#), was preserved exempt from all stain of [original sin](#).");
- The Perpetual Virginity;
- The Bodily Assumption. None of these are in God's Word. Jesus is never recorded in the Scriptures as ever calling Mary His Mother, He does call her Woman twice in public. Once is in this week's text.

Let's be perfectly clear: It is a form of idolatry to bestow on Mary honor, titles, or attributes that in effect give her a co-equal status in the redemptive work of her Son or elevate her as a special object of veneration. Nonetheless, Christ loved and honored His mother as a mother. He fulfilled the fifth commandment as perfectly as He fulfilled them all. And part of the responsibility of honoring one's parents is the duty to see that they are cared for in their old age. Christ did not neglect that duty.

He addresses her as "woman." Nowhere in the Gospels does He ever call her "mother"; only "woman." The expression conveys no disrespect. But it does underscore the fact that Christ was much more to Mary than a Son. He was her Savior, too (cf. [Luke 1:47](#)). Mary was no sinless co-redemptrix. She was as

dependent on divine grace as the lowliest of sinners, and after Christ reached adulthood, her relationship to Him was the same as that of any obedient believer to the Lord. She was a disciple; He was the Master.

Christ Himself rebuked those who wanted to elevate Mary to a place of extraordinary veneration: "A certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!' But He said, 'More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'" (Luke 11:27-28). Mary was blessed because she was obedient to the Word of God—the same as any other believer. Her position as Christ's mother did not carry with it any special titles such as co-mediatrix, queen of heaven, or any of the other forms of deification medieval superstition has attached to the popular concept of Mary.

Finally this passage prompts us to ask the most important question, "How does one enter into this personal relationship with Christ?"

The context of where we are cries out for action. Remember from verse 28 the urgency of this relationship with the only solution to our sin problem. Jesus declares that sins are forgivable (v. 28) – but then reminds us that unforgiven sin will receive eternal punishment.

So how can we be sure that we have a personal relationship with Jesus? Jesus said that salvation is clearly seen by an internal change. Look again at verses 34-35. Here is the key. The test of a true believer is this – one who is "doing the will of God."

Whose will is directing you? Is it your will and your way or is it God's will and way? Jesus simplified the complex religion of His day down to a simple message. He sent His disciples out to preach – repent and believe the Gospel.

He was declaring what we all needed. **You must turn from your own way** (Isaiah 53 all we like sheep have turned ... to our own way) which is called repenting; **and turn to God in faith, which is called believing.**

Either we try to get to Heaven our own way – or the ONLY way.

The key evidence is v. 35 "doing the will of God" It is not the sayers but the doers that get to Heaven.

This is the heart of all we do in this world for God. Calling men and women, boys and girls to repent and believe.

Friday night I had an incredible 45 minute talk with two ladies. They had watched me studying the Bible for 2 hours and finally they came over and sat down across from me and asked, "Do you teach the Bible?"

I had been charting every personal soul winning event in Christ's life. I had found 7 by then after reading (skimming) the first three Gospels. I was so intent I hadn't even seen them come and sit down. So I answered yes I do. They then said they had questions about God and the Bible to ask me. I began as I always do by asking if each of them had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Then I explained to them how they could. Here is what I said. Simply stated – repent and believe. We have all gone our own way. As Isaiah said, "We have turned everyone to their own way". So we must repent, and turn from our way, our will, our life – to Him. Then we must believe that we are only saved by what Jesus did as our sin bearer. That is how Jesus explained it by the way. Look again at Mark 3.34-35.

34 And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! 35 For **whoever does the will of God** is My brother and My sister and mother."

Think of what Jesus was saying by these words. It was a sweeping indictment upon the religious (but unsaved) people of His day. He left no one untouched by His words. This is what Jesus said:

- Knowledge is not enough—the religious leaders had that and still missed salvation.
- Following is not enough—the crowd did that and still missed salvation.
- Instead it is hearing God's Word and putting it into practice (Luke 8:21; James 2:24). When we do this, we come into an intimate relationship with our Savior.

We could explain this new relationship with God that begins, by the words of the familiar hymn "Have Thine Own Way, Lord". This should reflect the desire of every true Christian:

Have Thine own way, Lord!

Have Thine own way!

Thou art the Potter;

I am the clay.

Mold me and make me

This was a frequent theme of Christ's messages. Turn back to Matthew 7. 21

So how do you get in? Again and again (I found seven specific examples in the Gospels) Jesus explains to individuals that they must repent and believe.

- See Jesus as your only hope, as your sin bearer, and believe that He can take away your sins. John 3 as the serpent was lifted up that whosoever believeth.

- Leave your life of sin as Jesus said to the woman taken in sin in John 8.11. In Ezek 36.26, 31 hate your sin, loathe your evil ways, and leave them. Repent of going your own way.

Jesus stopped and spoke to seven different individuals about their souls. These are a complete set of soul winning lessons taught to us by Jesus Christ Himself. Let me list them and then we can analyze them:

- Nicodemus (John 3.1-21) Jesus emphasized the new birth, and the seeing of Christ as the only hope in this account.
- Woman at the well (John 4.1-26) is the emphasis upon salvation is worshipping God.
- Man born blind (John 9.1-14)
- Rich young ruler (Mark 10.17-22; Luke 18.18-23) enthused but lost.
- Scribe and the greatest commandment (Mark 12.28-34) close but not in, near but lost.
- Sinful Woman (Luke 7.36-50)
- Zachaeus (Luke 19.1-10)

When we come to Jesus we enter into a totally new relationship with God. Look again at verse 34.

Jesus looked at those seated around him (not the entire crowd, but probably his disciples who were seated closest to him) and answered his own question. The types of people who can have a relationship with him are those who listen, learn, believe, and follow. In these words, Jesus explained that in his spiritual family, the relationships are ultimately more important and longer lasting than those formed in his physical family.

In other words, "If you come to Me and do the will of the Father, you're the ones who are closer to Me than even My blood relatives." He is saying now that there is something higher and holier even than a family relationship, and that is when a person, a sinner in rebellion against God, comes in obedience by simple faith in Christ. In yielding obedience to Him, by trusting Him, a new relationship is established which is the highest relationship this world knows anything about, even above parent and child.

These are revolutionary, life changing words. It doesn't matter who you are, what you have done in the past, who you know or do not know – Jesus offers to you the "inner circle" right down front and next to Him.

Let all true Christians drink comfort out of these words. Let them know that there is one at least who knows them, loves them, cares for them and counts them as his own family. What does it matter if they are poor in this world? They have no cause to be ashamed when they remember that they are the brothers and sisters of the Son of God. What does it matter if they are persecuted and ill-treated in their own homes because of their religion? They may remember the words of David, and apply them to their own case: "Though my mother and father forsake me, the Lord will receive me" ([Psalm 27:10](#)).

And this offer of a relationship with Jesus is universal. Jesus was offering it – as we do today – to all the world. This relationship is available to everyone and anyone who will believe in Him and turn from their own way to do the will of God.

The Lord's purpose in referring to His disciples as His mother and brothers was to teach that He invites the entire world into His intimate and divine family. Anyone can enter His spiritual family by trusting in Him, and the family of God is the only family that ultimately matters.

Even being a member of Jesus' own earthly family did not merit salvation by virtue of that relationship. Jesus' invitation therefore extended to His natural mother and half brothers, because they, too, needed to be saved from sin. Apart from personal faith, they were no more spiritually related to Him than any other human being. "All of those, and only those, who believe in Me are spiritually related to Me," He was saying. **For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.**

The **whoever** indicates the universality of the invitation. No one who believes is excluded. And, on the other hand, no one who does not believe will be included. God's first and most absolute desire and requirement for mankind is belief in His Son. "This is the work of God," Jesus said, "that you believe in Him whom He has sent" ([John 6:29](#)). Until a person believes in Christ, God cannot give him any spiritual help, and that person cannot give God any spiritual service.

But there is a demand to this free gift, this universal offer. And that demand comes from the very mouth of Jesus. The same One who said for all to come to Him, also warns that the coming must be a genuine turning away from self. There must be a genuine repenting and believing.

Being rightly related to Christ, however, requires more than a mere verbal declaration of loyalty. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven," Jesus warned; "but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness'" ([Matt. 7:20-23](#)). Saving relationship to Jesus Christ comes only from submissively believing in Him and receiving the gift of salvation He offers. "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" ([Acts 4:12](#)).

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