



1st Sunday after Trinity 2021 | Sermon – Revd Canon Stan Evans

And looking around on those who sat about him, he said ‘here are my mother, and my brothers!’

Well, I think every family on earth has experienced tensions, disagreements and arguments over these past months of lockdown.

Families! Is our family a circle of joy to us or an embarrassment? Do we dread Christmas reunions or count off the days in eager anticipation? For Jesus it was a bit of both.

Jesus’s mother of course was one of the best. Dad had died some years back, and she had had quite a struggle. Never once did she abandon this strange son, even though he remained somewhat of a mystery to her. She could never understand him, but of course knew from the beginning that he was very different. All that reading and studying when he should have been out with the other lads; all those times when he would disappear for hours on end, apparently for long solitary walks; that distance he maintained, even with her, even though he had so much devotion and thankfulness for his parents.

Her heart was big enough, not only for Jesus, but for all he brought home with him. She became mother to them all. She provided motherly love for all, and they not only listened to her and loved her, but respected her greatly. Later, there was always to be a seat of honour for her in the inner councils of the infant Church.



Within the family, jealousy was a problem, and you can see why. His brothers had to sweat all day keeping the joinery business going, while Jesus was of little use – always his head stuck in a book or out on the hillside talking to God.

Somehow – this Jesus began to be famous, and the crowds came nosing around and barging in and it all became too much for the brothers and the family to bear.

When it came to the Bank holiday, when simply everyone went to Jerusalem, the author of the fourth Gospel tells us that this Jesus refused to go; his excuse was – *‘the time wasn’t right’* – a fine Messiah he was turning out to be.

On this occasion related to us by Mark, the family has had enough. They come to halt his spiritual circus, to talk some sense into him and to get him to come home.

Of course they cannot get near him, but they relayed a message to Jesus, telling him that his mother and brothers were outside. His answer:

Tell them that ‘Jesus is in conference, healing and teaching, and changing the world, and he cannot be interrupted even for his beloved mother and exasperating brothers.’



This is astonishing reading for those who thought that this Jesus was not the Jesus they thought him to be. It is so unchristian to talk like that surely? It cannot be Jesus talking about his mother that way. Surely Christianity is all about families around the fireside, at Christmas and Saturday outings?

No, Jesus reveals here our true relationship to family under God. He loves his family, but they come second. That really says it all.

Remember the time when as a young boy in Jerusalem recorded by Luke, he caused his parents so much anguish, he had been saying that he had another Father, another family, to whom he owed prior allegiance.

Important as our families are, we are bound with far closer ties to those whose lives are woven with ours into the tapestry of the will of God. We may not have known them long, we may have nothing at all in common with them except our shared calling, but they are our brothers and sisters whom we love through death and beyond, those for whom Jesus commands us to lay down our lives.

'Here are my mother, and my brothers'.

Jesus does not disown his family; he is acknowledging a relationship that is higher than the physical bond. He establishes a new family of relations, no doubt hoping that his own relatives, like everyone else, will come to accept him as he is. Clearly his relatives have trouble accepting the change that Jesus has undergone – from becoming a village carpenter to a mighty prophet.

The Revd Stan Evans

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As John writes: ‘not even his brothers had faith in him.’

And Jesus has to face that misunderstanding and rejection

– all are part of the cross he had to bear.

The really good news is that we are part of Jesus’ new family.

We are his mother and brothers and sisters – if we do the will of God.

Doing the will of God may alienate us from our family and relatives,

but the witness of Jesus always points us towards a more important

relationship. That is why we gather as a family of faith; to bless our

heavenly Father and gain strength from our brothers and sisters.

The answer given by Jesus at the end of our Gospel today – when the message had at last reached him, does not in any way depreciate the sacredness of family relationships, but asserts that the ties which bind the spiritual family of God are even deeper and dearer, and are based upon obedience to the will of God.

This is, so to speak, the germ truth out of which grew the early church.

AMEN.