

BIBLICAL INSIGHTS #126:

WHEN THEY CAME TO TAKE JESUS AWAY

By John Temples

There is a particularly poignant event in the life of our Lord recorded in Mark 3. At this time, it was early in Christ's ministry; He was beginning to attract large crowds. But it was a very busy and intense time, as Mark's record shows:

- He had just dramatically healed a man on the Sabbath, attracting the wrath and opposition of the Pharisees (Mark 3:1-5).
- The Pharisees and Herodians (Jews loyal to Herod) marked Him for death. (These two groups normally despised each other, but their mutual hatred of Jesus brought them together.)
- The Lord withdrew to the sea, seeking rest; but multitudes followed Him. Mark 3:9 says, "And He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him. For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him."
- He did battle with Satan, casting demons out of people (verses 11-12).
- He withdrew to the mountains and chose His twelve apostles (verses 13-19).

After all this came the poignant moment I spoke of: "And they went into a house. Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. *But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, "He is out of His mind"* (Mark 3:19b-21).

The "house" where Jesus was staying was likely Peter's house, since they were in Capernaum (Mark 2:1). Once Jesus began His ministry, "He had no place to lay His head" (Matthew 8:20). Peter's house was "home" at this point in Christ's life.

Two factors make this occasion particularly sad and poignant. The first was the constant press of people seeking healing. Even "home," which should have been a place of quiet and rest, became just the opposite. The clamor of the crowds was

bad enough; but worst of all, Jesus was misunderstood by His own people. They came to “take Him away,” believing that “He was out of His mind” (verse 21).

There is some confusion over exactly who came to take Jesus away. Some versions say “his family.” Others say “his friends” or “his kinsmen.” The Greek term literally means “those who were from beside him” or “those who belonged to him.” Most likely those who came were some well-meaning friends or relatives of Jesus, not His personal immediate family. Note that a few verses later (v 31), it specifically says “Then His mother and brothers came to Him,” suggesting that the first people who came were different, not His immediate family.

We would hope that it was not His mother or His brothers who were trying to persuade Jesus to abandon His “Messianic fantasy.” However, it is true that His own brothers did not believe in Him until after the resurrection (John 7:3-5).

But here is something you and I can identify with. Many of us have obeyed the gospel, become New Testament Christians, and excitedly gone to tell our loved ones--“our own people”--hoping they would understand and be proud of us. But instead they throw it back in our face and say “You are out of your mind.”

It’s a sad and sobering thing to think that the reaction of some to the pure, lovely, majestic, kind, uplifting, and divine teachings of Jesus, the Son of God, was “he’s nuts!” It’s no wonder, then, that people think we who follow Him are strange!

And don’t think Jesus was immune to the hurt. John 6:66 tells us that after a particularly strong sermon, “many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.” The next verse says, “Then Jesus said to the Twelve, ‘Do you also want to go away?’” You can just feel the pain in His words.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS?

First, sometimes, becoming a Christian means alienating your family. We hope it would not be so, but it is so; and we must be extra strong to maintain our allegiance to Christ and His church. Jesus told us plainly: “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a

daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:34-38).

When the Lord said He came to set a man against his closest relations, He did not mean that His mission was to deliberately divide families; but that such division would be an unavoidable consequence of His coming.

The lesson for us is this: When our love for our relatives comes into competition with our service to God, we have to lovingly but firmly serve God.

Second, we are compensated when we are rejected by our earthly families for serving Christ--we have a new family. When Jesus heard that His mother and brothers had come for Him, He did not rebuke them; but He did not go with them either. He told His disciples that they were His mother and brothers and sisters. "For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and My mother" (Mark 3:35). This ought to be a great encouragement to us: the Lord regards every Christian as precious as His own flesh and blood. We may not be welcome at our kinfolks' table, but we are always welcome at Christ's table.

Third, spiritual ties are more important than fleshly ties. The Bible teaches that husbands are to love wives, wives are to love husbands, parents are to love their children, and children are to honor their parents. But our love for Christ and His church must transcend it all. Those family ties are temporal; spiritual ties are eternal.

When we make statements like:

- "My family comes first"--
- Nothing is more important than my family"--
- "My children are the most precious thing I have"--
- "I worship the ground my wife walks on"--

--we had better think about what we are saying.

Please don't misunderstand. The Bible teaches us to prize and be loyal to our blood relations. But there must be balance. The Bible Exposition Commentary says, "Our Lord was not suggesting that believers ignore or abandon their families in order to serve God, but only that they put God's will above everything else in life. Our love for God should be so great that our love for family would seem like hatred in comparison (Luke 14:26). Certainly it is God's will that we care for our families and provide for them (see 1 Tim 5:8), but we must not permit even our dearest loved ones to influence us away from the will of God."

I have known Christians who have essentially quit the church because their children were getting old enough to go with them on camping trips, or to be involved in sports, etc. These parents may think they are pleasing God by honoring and preferring these earthly ties, but they are not. Remember these sobering words: "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37).

I have also known husbands who have put a snare and a temptation in front of their wives. (Wives can do this also, but it seems that husbands do it more often.) What I'm talking about is when the husband says to his wife, "You need to choose between that church and me." When I preached in Idaho, I knew a man who got so mad when his wife would go to church that he would lock her out of the house (until he got hungry).

Wives or husbands in that situation have a tall order: to be extra kind and not respond in anger. Show your spouse that being a Christian is actually going to make you a better wife or husband.

So think on these lessons:

- Sometimes when you have obeyed God, your loved ones will misunderstand or reject what you have done. Even Christ's "own people" did so. You have to be ready to accept and deal with that.

- If your earthly kith and kin reject you, God compensates you abundantly--He gives you a new, larger spiritual family, the church.
- We must keep our priorities straight. Physical ties are precious, but they are temporary; spiritual ties are more important. It is not honoring Jesus to put family activities above church responsibilities.

And remember, this is yet another sacrifice Jesus made for you and me: He was willing to accept misunderstanding, ridicule, and even rejection by His own earthly family in order to establish His spiritual family. Jesus paid you and me a supreme compliment in Mark 3. He called us His family. Don't ever forget that. --John
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