

2/4/24

Good morning Cornerstone! It is good to be with you. I want to thank you for worshiping with us this morning. If this is your first time worshiping with us, I want to invite you to fill out our connection card. It just lets us get to know you a little more and be able to connect with you throughout the week. If Cornerstone is home for you, you can use our app to check in and let us know you are here. There you can also fill out a prayer request so we can be praying for you throughout the week.

We are going to be continuing our sermon series called "Counterfeits" where we are looking at the things in our life that will often take the place of God. We will chase after them to bring us Joy or Hope, but we can only be satisfied when we find those things in God Alone.

We started this series off last week setting the stage that when we search for true joy and peace, we can only ever find them fully in God Alone. Everything else that we pursue leads to disappointment. If we pursue God, especially in the hard times, we will know his joy and peace so well that when the counterfeit comes along, we will not fall into it because we know the real thing.

This week we are starting off with I think the hardest or the easiest things, depending on your situation, that will take the place of God. It is the counterfeit that we will fall into looking for true joy, and that is our families.

Today our scripture is going to be found in Luke 8:19-21. If you have your bibles go ahead and turn there, if you would like to follow along with us. If you do not have a paper bible and would like one, we have some available for you in the back. You can also follow along with us today on the app with the scripture and our sermon notes available to you there.

But before we dive in the teaching today, lets read our passage this morning together which comes from the book of Luke 8:19-21. So let us stand as you are able, out of reverence for God's word as we proclaim the truth in God's word.

SCRIPTURE Luke 8:19-21

"Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. And he was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you." But he answered them, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."

This is the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

INTRO

Now I want to clarify what I mean when we are talking about families. I don't mean our immediate family like our spouse or our children. When we talk about family, I am referring to our parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Some would say our extended families. These people can sometimes play significant roles in our lives. For some of us, they were important and influential and may remain important and influential. There is a lot of value to be had in the relationships with our families and our friendships that feel like family, but just like anything else they are maintained with boundaries. As the famous saying goes, 'good fences make for good neighbors'.

I want to talk about the boundaries that are set on the relationships that we keep. Especially with our families, when it comes to being believers in Jesus and growing in our relationship with Christ.

Like we talked about last week our true Joy and peace can only be found in God alone. We can see the value in our families. We can enjoy each other's company; we can see the value in the role that they play in our lives, but they can and should never disrupt the relationship of the believer with God.

Jesus knew a lot about families. Jesus as we know and hear every time around Christmas, he was born of the virgin Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit and born into the flesh through her. Even though Jesus' conception was supernatural, he was still born in to a natural family. A family that would have been normal for the first century Jewish culture. He would have been the oldest child of Mary and his earthly father Joseph, but Jesus had siblings too.

We know for sure that Jesus had at least 4 brothers, James, Joseph, Simeon, and Judas¹. Scripture also mentions that Jesus had sisters² but they are not named or numbered. That had to be an interesting dynamic growing up right? Having Jesus as you bring brother. Wrestling with your big brother you get hurt and he heals you before your mom found out.

BODY

In our passage that we are looking at this morning, Jesus has been traveling and doing his ministry. At the time Jesus has been teaching the people. With his reputation for having these revolutionary teachings he would often gather large crowds of people. Setting the stage for what is happening here, Jesus is teaching this large crowd of people, and Jesus' mother, Mary, and his brothers have come to see him.

Luke 8:19-21

"Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. And he was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you." But he answered them, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."

There's a couple things happening here. It says that he was told, that means Jesus' family probably found one of the disciples and told them they were looking for Jesus and they came to him. Then he responds that his family, the one that he has obligations to are those that hear the word of God and follow it. Jesus told the messenger I am with my family, even though Mary and his brothers were elsewhere. Which sounds kind of harsh, but we'll come back to that statement in a second but notice that he does not include Mary and his brothers in the ones that hear the word of God and do it.

Now we have no reason to believe that Mary did not believe in God or that she did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. After all she was the one that saw the angel Gabriel and knew very well the miraculous circumstances around Jesus' birth. Now this could indicate that Mary may have forgotten or that she was so used to Jesus being just her son and forgot that he was the Messiah, but there is nothing in scripture that points to that.

However, we do know from a few passages that his brothers did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

John 7:3-5

¹ Matt 13:55; Mk 6:3; Jn 2:12, 7:3,10)

² Matt 13:56

“So his brothers said to him, “Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. ⁴ For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.” ⁵ For not even his brothers believed in him.”

Jesus’ brothers eventually did believe. In Acts 1:14, After Jesus’ resurrection and ascension it says that they were counted among the disciples. Paul also mentions James specifically as one of the apostles³. James would also go on to write the book of James that we have in our scripture today.

Now even though their belief would eventually change, at the time that Jesus is teaching to the crowd, they were not counted as those that hear the word of God and do it. The familiarity that his family had with him was a hindrance to their belief. They knew Jesus, they grew up with him, now that Jesus is seen as this Son of God, instead of just their big brother, could have been their stumbling block. We see this when Jesus traveled to Nazareth to preach the gospel.

Matthew 13:54-57

“and coming to his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, “Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? ⁵⁵ Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” ⁵⁷ And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.”

Jesus was probably experiencing this firsthand because the brothers that knew him so well did not believe. Now Jesus’ family would have been witness to his ministry. When he went to the wedding at Cana where he turned the water into wine, it says that he traveled with his family⁴. During his ministry they would have heard about his miracles and his teaching and he visited them when he traveled through Galilee⁵.

So even through all of this, Jesus knew that they did not believe he was the Messiah, and he makes the distinction when they came to visit him. Saying that he was with his family already and he points out that his family are those that hear the word of God and do what it says.

He says that his family is defined by those who are obedient to God’s word. There is this theme that carries throughout the book of Luke. The book is written to identify who Jesus was and the theme that Luke carries throughout the book is, because of who Jesus is and was, we have to be obedient to what he said and taught. The inclusion of this dialogue from Luke shows that his own brothers and sisters are no exception to that obedience.

This points out 3 things about our human relationships in comparison to God. Every relationship has to be met with **priorities, boundaries, and limitations**.

The first is that in our relationships there has to be a clear priority to our relationship to God above everything else. **How we relate to God comes before family**, before our spouses, before our children,

³ Galatians 1:19

⁴ John 2:12

⁵ John 7:1-5

before extended family, and before our own needs. We are defined in our relationship to God by being those that hear the word of God and those that do what it says.

It is not enough to listen to sermons, to read your bible, to have a good prayer life, or even to be the greatest human being on the planet. The word of God must be reflected in our life by our obedience to what it says. Our obedience to God and his word takes priority over all our human relationships.

Now our human relationships can be good. Two weeks ago we talked about the importance of the church and Christ-centered community. How we depend on each other and grow closer together as a community. How the church can be the redeemed families we never had.

God's word also instructs us to honor our father and mother, which we will talk more about in a minute. These human relationships can be a good thing. So, I am not saying that we need to swear off our families become monks and live under a vow of silence to focus on our relationships with God.

What I am saying is that many good things can receive misplaced affection. Good things can become idols we worship or counterfeits we think will bring us the satisfaction that only God can give. One of those is our families. Jesus challenges his followers not to prioritize their lives around the family first and foremost, but around God. Which is why Jesus gave priority to the crowd and not to his mother and brothers that were looking for him.

The things of this world that we so often turn to for satisfaction — food, clothing, and family—are not as important as the kingdom of God, and never will be. Jesus shows the kingdom of God comes first before everything. We talked about it last week from Jesus' sermon on the mount...

Matthew 6:33

"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Jesus knew that this was important. Not only did he state this distinction about those that are truly his family, but he also pointed this out when he talked about becoming his disciple.

Luke 14:25-26

"Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them,²⁶ 'If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.'"

Jesus when he is stating this, he is not telling us to literally hate our family members to follow him. He is using something called hyperbole. This is when someone uses an exaggerated statement to make a point. He is not calling us to turn away from our families but that our love for God and our devotion to his teachings is to be so great that when you compare our love and devotion to anything else it can appear as hate by the comparison.

How's that for inspiration. Let's do a little self-reflection for a second. If we were to compare our relationships with our family to our relationship with God. By comparison, could you say that you love God so much, love him with so much capacity that if someone were to see how much you can love God, they would think you hate them because you don't love them like that?

Jesus went as far as to say...

Matthew 10:37

“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

Going back to the passage in Luke 14, his conditions to be his disciple don't stop there...

Luke 14:27-33

²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰ saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ ³¹ Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³ So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”

Jesus awaited death in Jerusalem, a fate that all of his disciples had to be prepared to face. All of them would face death for their belief in him⁶. John was the only one to die of old age, but he faced that death many times, being burned with oil, and exiled to a deserted Island.

Jesus tells them to count the cost. Essentially this is telling them to prepare to make these sacrifices in order to follow me. After you have seen what it is going to cost you, be prepared to pay this price for my name sake. If you are not willing to give it up to be obedient to me and my teachings, don't follow me. If you are not willing to renounce all that you have you cannot be my disciple.

Jesus sees the abundance of possession and the abundance of relationships as a hindrance to faith. They both have the potential to cause someone to either deprioritize God's position in their life or cause them to question why they follow him at all. They are to renounce all, or they are to rid themselves of anything that over takes priority over God⁷.

This meant selling everything they had for the betterment of the poor. This meant leaving behind the family that has rejected the gospel, in order to embrace the new family that they have in the church. They do this all for the sake of spreading the gospel. We see this all tangibly in the early church.

Acts 2:42-47

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

⁶ Matthew 10:38

⁷ Matthew 19:21

Jesus is saying that he must be the absolute first priority in your life. He is number 1 all the time and nothing comes before him. That affects the way we live our lives, the way we make decisions, the way that we raise our children, the things that we devote our time to, and the relationships that we keep. God is the first priority, and we seek to hear his word and to obey it. I had an old Pastor from the church I grew up in, He used to say all the time, the best way to spell love is O-B-E-Y.

When we establish our relationship with God as the priority. When we seek his kingdom first only then can we truly enjoy the benefits of family and material blessings, in the way God intended them to be enjoyed.

Jesus reminds us that the family we should care about is larger than we may imagine. It also contains people who may be complete strangers. From this perspective, the family is an important consideration, but we will have a different definition of family than many commonly use. Rather than a counterfeit for God, this family definition Jesus gives refocuses us and reminds to care for others as we work toward the same goal: doing God's will.

Of course, this doesn't mean that family isn't important or that familial responsibilities are no longer in play. Looking at Jesus as the example. As Jesus hung on the cross, he made sure to take care of his mom by entrusting her to someone outside of his immediate family.

John 19:26-27

"When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home."

Up to this point Mary, Jesus' mother, would have been following Jesus, depending on him and the disciples to provide for her and to support her. This points to Jesus' earthly father, Joseph, probably passed away at this point. As the oldest son the responsibility to take care of his mother would have fallen to him. He was and acted in his responsibility to his mother to take care of her.

But notice that he transfers the responsibility to his disciple John upon his death. Jesus had 4 other brothers who could have cared for his mom, but he didn't tell them to take care of her? Based on Jesus' previous statements, I believe that it was probably because, at this point, His brothers still didn't believe. They were not his family, but John was.

But Jesus's reminder of who family is provides a moment of reflection on whether the family has become a counterfeit for true joy. Which is why our relationships, even the ones with our families have to be maintained with **boundaries**.

I think that these same boundaries apply to our friends that are unbelievers too. The boundary we are supposed to have is if your families are not believers, they do not hold weight upon your life. They are not the ones that have influence to change your relationship with God. You do not go to them for advice, their opinions do not carry merit, because as those that reject the gospel, they cannot be people that spur you on and help you draw closer to God. Which is another reason perhaps Jesus chose John to care for his mother and not his biological brothers. This does not dismiss honor. God commanded us to Honor our father and mother. They may offer advice and we can listen to them, honor their experience and position in our lives but we do not allow those things to determine our priorities.

The boundary is, you are a byproduct of them genetically, but if God is your first priority, your real family, the ones that you depend on in times of trouble, the ones that you allow to speak into your life, the ones that you are willing to make sacrifices for, for the sake of spreading the gospel, those people are the ones that hear God's word and do what it says.

When we have a duty to honor our father and mother, to care for them or to provide for them, like what Jesus did for Mary. Even if they do not believe it is not done out of obligation because of the relationship, it is done out of the obligation to spread the gospel. That is not something that you do alone. If you have a parent that needs assistance for health reasons, if you do it out of the obligation as their child, you do it alone. If the obligation is for the spreading of the gospel, you reach out to your redeemed family for people to come along side you. Have others be able to help share the gospel with them, and as your family help in the needs to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

God is your priority, you maintain boundaries with your relationships with those that do not believe, but finally your obligations have **limitations**.

These relationships with family have the limitation that they cannot draw you away from God. If you are drawn to fulfill obligations in your family and you find yourself withdrawing from your relationship with God or your connection with his body, you have surpassed your limitations in that relationship. If you are growing closer to your brother and simultaneously growing further away from the family that is obedient to God, you have surpassed the limitations of that relationship.

You create limitations so that those relationships do not alter your time, energy, or efforts in your identity as a disciple of Christ.

Those limitations will look different to everyone. Priority and boundaries can be a copy and paste from person to person. However, limitations are the things that are unique to the individual. You know yourself; you also know the company that you keep, create limitations so that you are not seeking joy, fulfillment, peace, devotion, love or unity with a counterfeit, when that can only ever be found in God alone.

The time where these limitations can be the hardest is around the holidays. When we have our families that are gathering together. We have all our traditions and our things that we have fond memories of. We can find enjoyment in those things and even in the people that we share those things and memories with, but we must know where our priorities lie. Asking ourselves 'would the holidays still be meaningful if those traditions and get-togethers were removed?'

True Joy is not found in our Families or traditions.

This change is not easy. I know that this can be really uncomfortable to hear especially those that are really close with our extended families that are not believers. Probably creating more questions for people about how they are supposed to walk out of here today and apply this to their own families. This is not an easy thing to talk about or even to do. Even for me.

I am really close with my family. My Dad and Mom are believers. I believe that my brothers and sister are as well. I have had to wrestle with this too this week. I have asked myself this week, 'What does the truth in this passage look like for my situation?' It's something that we have to wrestle with. To think that we are to treat the people in the church better than we treat our own Father and Mother, if they are not

believers. To create this exchange where we push our possessions and our relationships aside so that we can follow God well. Not only that but that we can see those that hear his word and are obedient to it, as more of our family than those that raised us.

This wrestling, this sense of struggle to apply the truth even when its hard is why Jesus told his disciples to count the cost. If you want to be my disciple, these are the things that you are going to have to give up. This is what your life is going to look like. Be prepared to give it all up, otherwise you cannot be my disciple.

We are relational being. We are created to be in relationship to each other. You will not find the true joy in any relationship that is outside of the family founded in obedience. To seek it or believe that it is founded outside of this family, is counterfeit to the truth. Because we know this, and we believe that God's word says it, we have to be obedient to it. We engage in our relationship with God as our first and main priority above all else. Maintain the boundary that others outside of this family cannot be the ones that help you move forward in life, especially the life that is your pursuit after a relationship with God.

APPLICATION

If all of that is true, if the people you see around you, turn and look around at the faces in these seats. If these are the people that hear the word of God and do the things it says. If these are the people that are now your family, how does that change the way you interact with them? How does it change the place that they hold in your life?

If God is your top priority and this is his body, how does your life need to change to reflect that? Does that mean you need to be more intentional about building relationships with them? Does that mean you need to go talk to them? Does that mean you make the effort instead of waiting for them to first?

This body is to be united in the purpose of obedience to God's word. Done for the sake of sharing the gospel. If we want to be effective in doing that, we have to act like a family united in one purpose. Setting God as the priority, placing boundaries with our families and those that are not believers. Also having limitations on the things that could pull us away from God. All of these things are hard things to do. Thankfully you are not doing it by yourself. We are all doing that or at least we should be. If we are united in enacting these things out of obedience, we are here for each other so that we can do that as a family.

I know that this is a lot. This is a heavy thing to think through. So, I want us to go into a time of reflection. Go before God, reestablish him as your priority if he is not currently. Let him show you how you depend on this family and switch your mindset in your obligations. So that your relationship with God can be stronger and we as a whole can effectively share the gospel with a world that is lost.

PRAYER AND REFLECTION

First and foremost is God your #1 priority? If not, what needs to change in your life so that he is?

What would it look like to place boundaries in your life with those that are not obedient to God's word?

- Boundary where they do not hold the position of influence in your life that can affect you being a disciple of Christ.

What Limitations do you have to set with your relationships so they do not draw you away from your relationship with God and your relationship to his body the church?

If those that are obedient to God are the ones that are our family, How does that change the way you interact with the people in the church?

COMMUNION