

“Who is my mother and who are my brothers?” Matthew chapter 12 verse 48

A few days ago I spoke about the relationship between truth and love, concluding that the truth is important but it must be ministered in love, otherwise it is in danger of becoming a means of judgment or a rod of punishment. Nevertheless, when we come to faith in Christ and set out on the life journey of discipleship, we have to come to terms with the fact that we are going to be expected to conform to the truth and not the other way around. Sometimes, that truth may be difficult for us to assimilate.

Jesus might have upset a few people, not least his family, when he said “Who is my mother and who are my brothers?” They were nearby, asking for him. Did they not have the first claim on his life? Apparently not. Indicating his disciples, he said “Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

Was Jesus denying his earthly family in favour of his disciples? No. Families were as important in Jesus's time as they are today, probably more so. We know from elsewhere in the gospels that Jesus loved his mother and made provision for her care when he died.

But what Jesus was making clear was that family relationships on earth are temporary. When we marry, we promise to be united with our spouses “until death parts us.” When we leave this world, we may well meet again members of our families on earth, and I am sure that we will still have a special connection with them because we have been related, but they will no longer be our husbands, wives, brothers and sisters. Questioned about this, Jesus once said “In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven.”

When we come to faith in Christ, we become part of God's family, united and one in him. It is these relationships that are eternal, because they are not physical relationships, but spiritual, eternal ones. When we become Christians, we are not expected to abandon our earthly families; hopefully we will love them better because of our faith, seeking their interests and healing relationships where they are broken. But we need to invest in our spiritual family, because that is where our eternal future lies.

Prayer

Father, thank you for my family in this world. Please bless them and draw them all to faith in you, so that they might become part of my eternal family. Please help me to understand that in you I have relationship that will last forever in your kingdom, in this world and in the next. Help me to build and nurture these relationships. In Jesus' name, amen.

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