

Trinity 2 Year B 2021

Genesis 3.9-15, 2 Corinthians 4.13-5.1, Mark:3:20-35.

Family is a word that evokes very different and strong feelings in people. Much that is joyful and good and yet often also evokes painful thoughts, disappointments and divisions too. This is so when used of human families, families of nations and the family of the church. There is a kaleidoscope of memory behind the word. Births, deaths, achievements, love, fracture, success and failure, divisions and reconciliations. We might think it safer to recognise that this is so when gazing upon another's family – such as the Kardashians, the royal family, or just those folk next door.

As our world has got bigger and more complicated the notion of family often struggles to keep up. We can speak of "immediate family" and yet so many families have multiplicity of sibling relationships different birth, adopted and step parents. The Jewish family of Jesus's time had more than we might first think in common with such complexity. Little neat nuclear families of a 1950's home life magazine are as far from Jesus's experience as they are from many families of today.

We don't know which relatives are referred to in the gospel – the likelihood is it was quite a number and quite a range. They thought Jesus was "out of his mind." They pose a shocking question for us: was Jesus out of his mind a madman or saviour of the world?

What is not posed is that he was a vaguely interesting person with some quaint and nice notions of how to behave. Such bland and beige description is left to our own age from those who wish to inoculate others from the transformational power of Jesus.

We are back into the guts of the year of Mark. What's happened so far? He's been baptised, tempted in the wilderness and has performed some healing miracles, called some disciples together and is beginning to teach. Crowds are gathering and it's only chapter 3.

The scribes, the religious folk don't like what Jesus is doing and the effect he is having. He must be possessed – but Jesus uses the metaphor of the household or family against them and then begins to redefine the meaning

of real family in the eyes of God. If the devil and evil is fighting against evil in the good things that have happened then it will not last. The reign of evil will end. The scribe's accusation is a clumsy attempt to explain away good things from someone they think is a danger and threat. It prompts Jesus to speak of family and openness to the spirit in a new way. A kingdom a household a family cannot stand if divided against itself. Quite the opposite the kingdom of evil "the strong man" is this passage is being confronted by something stronger to bring healing and truth where there is madness disease falsehood. It will later be one of Jesus's most fervent prayers before his passion, that his disciples, and by derivation that we, should be one and undivided in the Spirit and love which is the power of God shown in Christ.

Jesus does not reject, annul or invalidate his blood family but he is saying to them and to all that those who do the will of God are his brothers and sisters he calls them to an even deeper bond of love. Jesus the second Adam is not like the first Adam who blames Eve for his error and sets in train the propensity of humans to blame and dismiss others first even in spite of goodness that may come from them. No Jesus calls us to examine self, and be forgiven. Our experiences and observations of civil wars, conflicts such as in the middle east of our own time and even within human families tell us that forgiveness( even of self) is so much harder than blame of another.

Forgiveness is everything and yet to constantly paint the work of the Holy Spirit as the work of the devil is to paint oneself into a corner or to bite the hand that is offering to feed you. Such a sin against the spirit sees ugliness as beauty evil as good and falsehood as truth. This is a rare place in the gospel and our world for it is not how we are truly made and intended.

I take two lines from Jesus in this gospel of Today. Firstly to know the highness of our calling as brothers and sisters in baptism and our calling and place in the life and work of the church. Secondly to be gentle and open and open with our human families and relationships they might think us or we them a little mad, but it may be the stirrings and promptings of the Spirit. If it is there will be fruit that will last if not it will fade and die.