

Christ's Family

Scripture: Mark 6:1 – 3 & Luke 1:39 – 55

3/15/20

Last Sunday we look at the Roman Rulers in Christ's Day. Today on this 3rd Sunday of Lent, let us look at Christ's family. Of course we will look at Mary, Jesus' mother, and Joseph, Jesus' earthly father. We will also look at James, known as James the Just, and Jude who were Jesus' brothers.

In our first scripture text for today – Mark 6:1 – 3 – it says

Jesus went out from there and came into his hometown and his disciples followed him. When the Sabbath came, Jesus began to teach in the synagogue and the many listeners were astonished and they said – 'Where did this man get these things and what is this wisdom given to him and such miracles as these performed by his hands? Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, who has brothers of James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? Are not his sisters here with us?'

First let us look at Mary often referred to as the Virgin Mary. She was the most unique human being who ever lived due to her extraordinary role in bearing Jesus. She visited her cousin Elizabeth who was soon to be the mother of John the Baptist. Elizabeth poured out her heart with these magnificent words to Mary found in Luke 1:39 – 45.

*In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry – '**Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what there was spoken to her by the Lord.**'*

And then Mary responded with magnificent words in Luke 1:46 – 55 called Mary's Song of Praise – *And Mary said – '**My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with***

good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and his descendants forever.'

How could a humble teenage girl announce that future generations would call her blessed unless she firmly believed what was happening to her? Her prophecy is fulfilled as each generation of Christians calls her blessed. Her prophecy is fulfilled when we call her blessed. It is then that we become a fulfillment of the prophecy to which we are all witnesses.

Mary is front and center in the Christmas story, but is often overlooked in Jesus' public ministry. Yet Mary was with him until the end and beyond. She was present at Jesus' first miracle at the wedding in Cana. In fact she was the one who ask Jesus to do that miracle of change water to wine. Mary was present during the week that would change the world – Holy Week in Jerusalem. She was at his cross on Good Friday when Jesus gave her over to John to take care of her. And she was there to celebrate Jesus' resurrection. Later, she was faithful to Jesus' words from the cross and she went to Ephesus with the disciple John and ended her days there. She was the most blessed woman indeed!

Now let us look at Jesus' earthly dad – Joseph. Most of our information on Joseph, Jesus' foster father, comes from his role as the unsung hero of the first Christmas. After learning the news about his intended, Mary, being pregnant, a pregnancy that he was not responsible for, he believed with angelic encouragement Mary's explanation and he did everything in his power to assist in the divine plan. Joseph protected Mary on the trip to Bethlehem, rescued her and Jesus from the murderous intentions of King Herod and he took his family to safety to Egypt and then back to Nazareth.

We know that Joseph taught Jesus his trade as a carpenter. Jesus was an apprentice carpenter in Joseph's shop. Jesus would have made agricultural implements, including yokes for oxen and plow handles.

Joseph appears once more when Jesus is 12 years old in the Temple in Jerusalem. This is the story where Jesus stays behind in Jerusalem, unknown to his family as they left the holy city. They travel for some time away from the city of Jerusalem until they discover that Jesus is not with them. Jesus' mom and dad return to Jerusalem to find Jesus teaching in the Temple and Jesus tells his parent – 'I am doing my Father's work!'

In those days, a man usually had to earn an adequate nest egg of money before marriage to support their households and so the man would often be older than their brides to be. Joseph was quite a bit older than Mary so Joseph died before them. In fact Joseph died before Jesus started his public ministry. We have no idea when he died, how he died, or where he died. We just know he died before the start of Jesus' public ministry.

Now let us look at Jesus' siblings. Let us concentrate on two of his brothers – James & Jude.

Who were these brothers and sisters? Who were these half siblings of Jesus? Were they children of Joseph & Mary after the birth of Jesus? This is the most popular story about them, but some scholars try to preserve the virginity of Mary and they speculate that the brothers and sisters come from relatives of Joseph & Mary that they adopted. This issue is disputed to the present day. Protestants like us conclude that the brothers & sisters came from Joseph & Mary after Jesus' birth.

For us, the brothers of Jesus provide a story of conversion. At first Jesus' brothers apparently doubted his claims. They even thought Jesus needed psychiatric help! (Mark 3:21) – 'When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said – 'Jesus is out of his mind!'

Paul reports that the risen Christ appeared to his brother James and James no longer was a doubter, but James became a believer. James became the first Bishop of the early church and he wrote the New Testament epistle bearing his name. James gave his life as a martyr for the faith. James is honored by Christians and Jews and he has become known as James the Just and James of Jerusalem. All his siblings converted as well to Christianity.

Jesus' other brother we will talk about today is Jude. The second to the last book in the Bible was written by Jude. He is the youngest brother of Jesus and his real name was Judas but his name was shortened to Jude so he would not be confused with Judas, the betrayer of Jesus.

Since Jude's brief epistle warns against false teachers invading the church, it may have been written as late as 80 to 90 AD. Jude's epistle shows his conversion and the conversion of many to Christ. Jude was skeptical about his older brother Jesus and he was very young during Christ's time of ministry, but he did also witness Christ after his resurrection and became a faithful believer in his brother, Jesus. Jude also died a martyr's death for his faith in Jesus.

So there is a not so short look at Jesus' family. What can we learn from them?

First from Mary we can learn to strive to have a faith like her. We, the common people of this world, can through God's help, have a faith that will transcend time. May we be inspired to have such a faith.

Second from Joseph we can learn to be a good example for others to follow. Joseph obeyed the angelic call in his life and he became the foster father of Jesus. May we obey God's will and assent to God's holy plan for our life.

Third from James the Just we can learn that even at times we may doubt Jesus, but if we come to God in prayer with all our humanity and errors, we can become credible and unmatched leaders in the faith.

And finally from Jude we can learn that without our faith in the emptiness of the tomb and Christ's resurrection, we are skeptics. May we never doubt Christ victory over death.

Let us pray:

May we, O God, strive to be as faithful as Mary. May we, O Lord, let your will be our guide in life like Joseph. May we, O Majesty, come to you in humility like James. And may we, O Savior, never doubt your victory over death like Jude. AMEN.