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Sermon Notes

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The Royal Family of God

Matthew 12:46-50

Introduction: The Blessings of Family

In the old city of Troezen in Greece, there lived long ago a princess named Aithra. She had one young son named Theseus, the bravest boy in all the land. Aithra smiled whenever she looked at him, but it was a sad kind of smile, for the boy had never seen his father, who lived far across the sea.

One day, she took her son into a grove that stood behind the temple. She led him to a tall oak, beneath whose shade grew purple heather bushes. There she sighed, and said “Theseus, my son, go into that thicket, and at the base of the tree you will find a great, flat stone. Lift it and bring me what lies beneath.”

Theseus pushed his way through the bushes, searched among the ivy, and finally found the stone his mother had mentioned. He pushed back the moss and tried to lift the stone, but no matter how hard he tried it wouldn't budge. With a sense of shame, he went back and told his mother, “I have found the stone, but I couldn't move it, nor could the strongest man in all Troezen.”

His mother sighed an unhappy sigh, and said “The day may come when you will be the strongest man in all Troezen. Then you must move the stone.”

YEARS PASSED... ever year it was the same ritual... but Theseus was never able to move the stone. One year, however, he came back thrilled to report, “I moved it a little! Maybe next year I can lift it entirely!!”

So in order to grow strong Theseus spent all his days in wrestling and boxing and taming horses, and hunting the boar and the bull and chasing goats, till at last there was not a hunter so swift or strong as Theseus. He was also trained in wisdom and counsel by his mother every day.

And when his eighteenth year had passed, Theseus went once more into the thicket with his saddened mother, who knew in her heart that this was the day she'd dreaded for years. He struggled as if his heart would explode within him, but finally the stone yielded and he toppled it over with a great cry of triumph. Theseus had conquered at last!!

Sword of bronze with a golden hilt, and a magnificent pair of golden sandals. He plucked them up and crashed through the bushes to show them to his weeping mother. Theseus was shocked at her reaction and began to weep himself, though he didn't know why.

His mother said “Bring what you have found and come with me so we can look down upon the sea.” They went outside the sacred wall and looked at the beautiful blue sea. Aithra pointed across the water and said “There is Attica, where th

Athenian people dwell. It is a beautiful land, with olive oil and honey. What would you do, son Theseus, if you were king of such a land?"

Then his heart grew great within him and he said "If I were king of such a land, I would rule wisely and well in wisdom and in might, that when I died all would weep over my tomb and cry 'Alas for the shepherd of his people!'"

Aithra smiled and said "Your father is King Aegeus of Athens. When he went to be king, he commanded me to treat you as a child until you should prove yourself by lifting this heavy stone. That task accomplished, you are to put on his sandals in order to follow in your father's footsteps, and to gird on his sword, so that you may fight giants and dragons, a King Aegeus did in his youth. And you are to go to him in Athens and say "The stone is lifted."

But Theseus wept, "Shall I leave you, O my mother?" he cried.

She answered "Weep not for me. That which is destined must be, and grief is easy to those who do nothing but grieve."

Then she kissed her Theseus, whom she'd raised from infancy for this moment, wept over him, then turned and went into the temple and he saw her no more.

Context

Proclaiming the Kingdom's Proximity

Matthew 4:17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Teaching the Kingdom's Nature: Sermon on the Mount

Demonstrating the Kingdom's Power: Miracles (Matthew 8-9)

Commissioning the Kingdom's Messengers: The Apostles (Matthew 10)

NOW:

Human Responses to the Kingdom

John the Baptist's Doubts

The Indifference of Korazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum

The Opposition, Hatred, and Murderous Plot of the Jewish Leaders (Matthew 12)

Summary: "That is how it will be with this generation..." The whole Jewish nation

Jesus' Family: Unbelief, Alarm, Protectiveness, Rebuke

- I. The Blessings and Limitations of Christ's Physical Family
- II. The Greater Blessings and Limitlessness of Christ's Spiritual Family
- III. The Kingdom of God Is a Royal Family
- IV. Applications

Matthew 12:46 While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. 47 Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." 48 He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" 49 Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

I. The Blessings and Limitations of Christ's Physical Family

A. What Scripture Teaches About Jesus' Physical Family

1. Christ had a physical mother and a step-father
 - a. Joseph was Christ's earthly father by adoption...
 - i) legitimizing Christ's claim to be King on David's throne...
 - ii) probably by now Joseph was dead, leaving Christ the rightful heir to David's Kingdom
 - b. Mary was also descended from David: from her He received His human nature
2. Christ had brothers and sisters
 - a. taught again and again in New Testament

vs. 46-47 While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. 47 Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you."

Matthew 13:55-56 "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us?"

John 2:12 After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.

- b. different use of word “brother” acknowledged
 - i) Hebrew and Aramaic had no word for “cousin”
 - ii) frequently “brother” could refer just to an extended family member

KJV Genesis 29:15 And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what shall thy wages be?

- c. BUT when the brothers are listed and there’s just four of them, the normal understanding is accepted

Mark 6:3 Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.

- 3. Therefore, Mary was not a perpetual virgin!!
 - a. Roman Catholic dogma: Mary was perpetually a virgin
 - b. established in the Catholic councils
- The expression "ever virgin" was taken up by the Second Council of Constantinople (553), which affirms: the Word of God, "incarnate of the holy and glorious Mother of God and ever virgin Mary, was born of her".
- This doctrine is confirmed by two other Ecumenical Councils, the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) and the Second Council of Lyons (1274), and by the text of the definition of the dogma of the Assumption (1950) (DS 3903) in which Mary's perpetual virginity is adopted as one of the reasons why she was taken up in body and soul to heavenly glory.
 - c. Biblical evidence very sketchy apart from the “brother of Jesus” passages
 - d. burden of proof on the Catholics... they must show from Scripture and not merely from Church Councils that Mary was a virgin after Jesus was born... this in the one thing they cannot do

4. Recent discovery: James’s ossuary

- 5. Bottom line: Jesus had a family... just like you and me!!

This was part of His sharing in our physical identity... this was His solidarity in one sense with the entire human race... His physical nature:

Hebrews 2:14-15 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

B. Christ's Godly Sense of Love and Responsibility

1. The Perfect Son: Obedient to Parents: Luke 2

Luke 2:51 Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.

2. Carpenter, Just Like Joseph

Matthew 13:55-56 "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us?"

Mark 6:3 Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.

Implies an apprenticeship program... Jesus learning the craft from His human father like any other Jewish boy would

3. Teaching on Responsibility to Provide for Parents: Matthew 15

Matthew 15:4-6 For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' 5 But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,' 6 he is not to 'honor his father 'with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.

4. Practicing what He preached: Caring for Mary on the Cross

John 19:25-27 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," 27 and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Conclusion: Jesus took His earthly responsibilities very seriously. He saw to His duties as a son, and He was the only one who ever lived who perfectly lived out the Law of Moses:

"Honor your father and mother."

C. BUT Christ Limited Significance of Physical Family

1. Consistent gentle rebuffs for His mother

a. Luke 2: “I have to be about my Father’s business...”

Luke 2:48-49 When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." 49 "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"

KJV: Didn't you know that "I must be about my Father's business?"

Jesus placed His Father's work above His earthly relationships... as He should

b. John 2 “Woman , what do I have to do with you?”

John 2:3-4 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." 4 "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come."

c. Luke 11:27 “Blessed rather are those who hear the word and obey it”

Luke 11:27-28 As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

2. The unbelief of His brothers

John 7: They give Him some free advice about His ministry... in effect reproving Him for bad strategy

John 7:3-5 Jesus' brothers said to him, "You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. 4 No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world." 5 For even his own brothers did not believe in him.

Jesus' reply is stunning:

John 7:7 The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil.

Later, Jesus would say to His own disciples:

John 15:19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

The reason the world could not hate His brothers is that, at that point, they still belonged to the world, as displayed by their unbelief

3. Why they came this time: the Synoptic story

Mark 3:21 When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

According to the account in Mark, Jesus' own family came to take charge of Him because they somewhat believed the reports that He was doing miracles by the power of Beelzebub. At least they were afraid He would be executed for blasphemy. Either way, the Greek expression is strong

Imagine Jesus' family coming to "take charge of Jesus"... a man over thirty years old

4. Other teachings about physical family

- a. honor father and mother; train children
- b. BUT don't love parents or children more than me

Matthew 10:21 "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.

Matthew 10:34-38 "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to turn "'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law-- 36 a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.' 37 "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; 38 and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Luke 9:61-62 Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." 62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

D. Larger issue: Christ belonged to a family of Abraham: the Jews

1. Matthew begins with a genealogy... HUMAN ANCESTRY

Matthew 1:1 A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham

2. BUT being physically related to Christ is not enough

Romans 9:2-6 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, 4 the people of Israel.... Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

It is not as though God's word has failed... for not all who are descended from Israel are Israel...

Whole lesson of Romans 9: Physical lineage is NOT ENOUGH... Paul had great sorrow and unceasing anguish in his heart because the Jews were physically related to Jesus but spiritually dead. NOT BORN AGAIN!!

Summary: Jesus came into the world as a result of a supernatural miracle... the Virgin birth. BUT he was born into very ordinary circumstances... a husband and wife who raised a normal family. Christ's mother and brothers were His closest witnesses to His life before His ministry began, and they did not believe in Him

This shows the blessings and limitations of physical family

Christ also laid the groundwork for the understanding of the Kingdom of God as a world-wide royal family... a family that is eternal, not temporary... a family whose commitments supercede those of the earthly family

II. The Greater Blessings and Limitlessness of Christ's Spiritual Family

A. Central Lesson: Superior Significance and Blessing of the Spiritual Family

vs. 48-50 "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" 49 Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

1. Physical family an immense source of joy, security, blessing
2. Spiritual family a GREATER source of joy, security, blessing
3. Blessed to drive out demons... MORE blessed to have names written in heaven

4. Blessed to give birth to and nurse the world's Savior... MORE blessed to hear and obey God's word

Luke 11:27-28 As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

B. Hearing and Doing the Word of God

1. "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven..." Not salvation by works
2. Symbolic of whole salvation process
 - a. to "do the will of the Father" is Christ's way of speaking of those born again
 - b. it involves the radical transformation of the whole life
 - c. obedience to the Father's will the clearest indication of being in the family of God
3. Characteristic of the truly saved... a lifestyle of obedience
 - a. consistent description of the blessed ones: those who hear and obey God's word
 - b. also description of the self-deceived and lost: "Away from me you evil-doers!!"
4. "Whoever" = only criterion for entry... simple and worldwide... Jew and Gentile the same

III. The Kingdom of God Is a Royal Family

A. The Kingdom is a Royal Family

Matthew 17:24-27 After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax came to Peter and asked, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?" 25 "Yes, he does," he replied. When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. "What do you think, Simon?" he asked. "From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes-- from their own sons or from others?" 26 "From others," Peter answered. "Then the sons are exempt," Jesus said to him. 27 "But so that we may not offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."

1. Physical universe given to teach us about God

Illus. "Some say the Gospel was given to help us understand the universe. I say the universe was given to help us understand the Gospel!!"

Human families given to teach a HIGHER principle: the true nature of the Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God is a Royal Family!!!

2. Marriage Relationship Has Spiritual Significance

a. every marriage has a physical purpose

Genesis 1:27-28 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.

b. but every marriage also teaches a spiritual lesson

Ephesians 5:31-32 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery-- but I am talking about Christ and the church.

In the incredible intimacy and permanence of the husband/wife bond, we get one analogy for the relationship between Christ and the church

3. So also other family relationships teach us about the Kingdom of God

a. Laban's joy-filled reaction

Brother to brother loyalty teaches us of Christ's bond to us

When Laban heard that his own sister's son had come to stay,

Genesis 29:14 Then Laban said to him, "You are my own flesh and blood."

b. even Joseph's brothers couldn't quite kill him

Genesis 37:27 Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed.

c. so Christ came into the world to fulfill perfectly what it means to be a flesh and blood brother

B. Immense Privilege: Membership in the Royal Family

1. Promised in John's Prologue

John 1:11-13 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

2. Purchased by Christ's blood

Hebrews 2:11-17 Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. 12 He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises." 13 And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me." 14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil-- 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. 16 For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. 17 For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

Jesus took on flesh and blood to make perfect the family relationship

He is our perfect brother!! And He considers us part of the family

3. Proclaimed after Christ's resurrection

John 20:17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

4. Perfected in glory

Romans 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

C. Advantages of Membership

Illus. Exclusive club's membership advantages

1. Peter's world-wide earthly spiritual family

Mark 10:28-30 Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!" 29 "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother

or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields-- and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.

2 World-wide family from every tribe, language, people, nation

3. Truest brotherhood there is

Illus. Liberal theology: "Fatherhood of God, brotherhood of man"... but without atonement or personal faith!!

Summary:

The Kingdom of God is a royal family whose members enter through simple faith in Christ... whose loyalties and commitments run deeper than physical bonds of flesh and blood

Earthly families may contain some enemies whose unbelief makes close relationship impossible

The Heavenly Family is eternal and will someday be perfect

IV. Applications

A. Concerning the physical family

1. Praise God for the blessings of family!!

Earthly family is one of the greatest blessing God ever made

Simply stop and praise God for settling you in the family He did

2. Realize Christ is not denigrating physical family at all here!! Not at all! Rather He's using family to show the higher blessings of the gospel

3. Cherish your family and be faithful to your family obligations

4. Christian parents: highest obligation is to lead your children to personal faith

5. Realize limitations of physical family:

parents, siblings, and children may break your heart... they may be among your most powerful opponents in the gospel

God has no grandchildren: each member of the true family of God must be born again by the Spirit into His eternal family

Thus, as Baptists, we do not baptize children... but we wait for them to make their personal profession of faith

BUT as Baptists we also make every effort to lead family members to Christ... parents labor, teach, pray, cry, and plead until their children are converted

B. Concerning the Spiritual family

1. Praise God that Christ is not ashamed to call you brother... He is bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh... BUT also we are united by His indwelling Spirit
2. Understand the Kingdom of God as a Royal Family
3. Labor to minister to other Christians as brothers and sisters... Christ takes this ministry intensely personally in "Sheep and Goats"

Matthew 25:40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

4. Realize that you belong to a spiritual family that extends to every tribe, language, people and nation... you can stay at their homes, eat their food, wear their clothing, feel their love, and they will cry when you leave

Illus. Mission stories... China, Japan, Kenya, St. Maarten, South Africa, Pakistan

5. Minister with all your might to the struggling and suffering family of God

C. Concerning Your Own Soul

John 3:3-5 Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." 4 "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" 5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.