

Mark – The Words of Eternal Life

The Family of Christ

Mark 5: 31-35

Well, our reading this evening comes from the Gospel of Mark 3:31-35. If you just remember where we are in the argument now, two passages ago, Jesus was told that or at least it was reported that Jesus family was telling him that he was out of his mind. And then we had the passage where Jesus taught on what it means and the importance and the danger of blaspheming the spirit. And now we move on to this next passage where Jesus again finds himself being confronted with his family, his biological family.

And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him. And they said to him, your mother and your brothers are outside seeking you. And he answered them. Who are my mother and my brothers? And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.

This is the word of the Lord. Please be seated.

Well, if you haven't learned already, you may have had the impression that Jesus was somewhat of a peacemaker who just said really sweet things that would do well in embroideries, hanging on walls and hallways of houses and that kind of thing. And yet, if you delve into Mark and you pay attention and listen to what Jesus is saying, you'll actually find that there are quite a few episodes like this one where Jesus gets a bit spicy in his response to those around him. I've mentioned this before. It's always fascinating to see how Jesus answers. Accusations against him when there's an audience around. Okay, so we'll take an eye and kind of look at that here. But notice again, the subject has returned as it has already been in chapter three to the question of family and Jesus. I think his statements here need to be seen in the context of what's come before. So we know a few things here and there's a few things we don't know. So first of all, notice it's his mother and his brother, excuse me, his brothers who are outside looking for him. Now, we don't know a whole lot about Jesus's family, but we know, of course, that he had a mother, Mary, and that she had a vision. And an angel appeared to her, and she conceived as a virgin and gave birth faithfully to Jesus and recognized what was happening as that was going on. He also had a father, Joseph, who similarly was comforted by an angel that this is the work of the Lord. And so he too would have known the background to the conception of Jesus. He would have known who Jesus is. But then we also find out that he's got multiple brothers and even sisters, as a matter of fact, in Mark chapter six, verse three we'll have another encounter with people talking about Jesus in light of his family. And they'll say in Mark chapter six, verse three. ***Is this not the carpenter?*** And that's interesting. That's the only indirect reference we possibly get to Joseph in Mark. Mark doesn't mention Joseph. Okay. Is this not the carpenter? And we know that Joseph was possibly was a carpenter. It's the son of a carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James and Joseph. That's the second, possible indirect reference to Joseph, because Jesus has a brother named

Joseph, which is just a Hellenized or a Greek way of saying Joseph and Judas and Simon and are not his unnamed sisters here with us as well. So, we know that Jesus has quite a large family. Okay. That includes his mother and his father and his brothers.

Now, what do we know about this family? One thing we can say for sure is we don't know what happens to Joseph, and we can just say that, okay, there are some, uh, there are some texts that are out there that are not considered canonical and have never been considered canonical by the church, but they might offer some interesting historical background. However, the one that gives the historical background here, the proto Evangelion.

Okay, in other words, the first Gospel of James, which no one thinks is actually the first gospel account, gives an account that Joseph had died. Okay, sometime after Jesus twelfth birthday. And why do we say that? Because in Luke, where we have that interaction with Jesus going into the temple and it says his parents were looking for him and he was twelve years old. Notice that his parents were looking for him. So Joseph is still there at that point. And yet we don't hear about Joseph again later. Now we have to just say we don't know. We don't know what happened. However, perhaps more interestingly, though, is that we have this encounter here where Jesus's family is out there and they are looking for him. Previously, they had possibly hinted that he is out of his mind. Now, we don't know if they're all saying this or if there is just a general concern amongst the family. Whatever is happening here seems to be a matter of general concern. And it includes his mother.

So what do we what can we say about all of that? I think we have to acknowledge this. Whatever's going on, Jesus family, like many of our families, is a family that is in process, right? We know that by the time Jesus is on the cross, Mary will be there beholding him as Lord and Savior. But we don't know what happened in the in-between time. Is it too much to say that she understood, but may be doubted later in life as she saw what Jesus was doing as his ministry actually developed, and there was maybe a period of time where she thought, this isn't what I had in mind, Lord. And she may be questioned it.

We also know that here we have Joseph and Judas. Another way to say Judas is Jude, and that's what he's called when he writes a letter on behalf of the Or to the church. And then we have Simon, who is relatively unknown, and then we have James, who is also another letter writer, most likely in the Bible. So the book of Jude and the book of James are Jesus brothers. So we know that later on there will be leaders in the church. But at this point, while he's gathered with his disciples, they're not there. As a matter of fact, they're outside trying to beckon him back out. They are looking for him.

So the passage raises a couple of questions. The first of all is this Jesus hears the call of family. They're out there seeking him. Whatever they're doing too. If you notice what it says here, the mother and the brothers came and they were standing outside, and they sent to him and called him. Notice how Mark lays that out. It's not that they don't know where Jesus is. They're standing outside and they're saying, Jesus, come back out here. Get back out here, Jesus, come out and meet with us. You see, Mark is showing them something, showing us something about the relationship here. The geography gives a hint to the spirituality of the story. They're not in the house with the disciples. Rather they're outside the house and they're saying, Jesus,

you need to come out here to us. They're even talking to people, right? Because some people are coming inside and saying, Jesus, your family is outside. Can you come out and meet with them? Well, he's in the middle of teaching and meeting with his disciples. So the story begins with the call of the family, but then it moves on.

Now to the question of faith. Really? We could say the question of faith and the family. The call of the family is. Jesus. Come out. What are you. What are you doing in there? Remember last time we saw them? They were saying at least some of them. He's out of his mind. And so they call to Jesus and notice it's a it's an there's an inherent question in the report that comes to him. It says, Jesus, your family is outside. They're seeking you. And by telling him that you're not just conveying information, what are they doing? They're evoking a response. What are you going to do? Jesus, how will you respond to this here? Your biological family? The people who are you? You are the most closely bound to in this life. They are calling on you. Are you going to stay in here with these strangers, these disciples, or are you going to come out? And are you to honor the call of your family? And notice how Jesus responds? He responds to the implicit question, Jesus, what are you going to do? Are you going to come out to them with another question? Jesus is a he's a master. He's a master debater in this way. He never lets himself get put in a corner, but rather he always engages the audience on the presuppositions of the questions that they're asking. You ever notice that when they come to him and they say, who should we give coins to? Should we give taxes to Caesar or should we give it to the Lord? Remember what he says. They say, well, let me give you my doctrine on taxes. No, he doesn't do that. What does he say? Well, what's the image on that coin? He puts it back to them in a question. He draws them in and he doesn't let it just stand the accusation that they are kind of implicitly bringing to him. And so notice they come in and they say, Jesus, aren't you going to do something? Your mother and your brothers are out there and they're calling for you. They're seeking after you. And what does Jesus say? He says, now who? Who are my mother and brothers? Actually, I don't think he says it and then immediately says the next sentence. As a matter of fact, Mark tells us. And then he looked around at those who were sitting around him. I think what Mark is telling us here is that Jesus responds with the question, who are those who are closest to me? Who are those who I am bound up with in life? Is it those with whom I have a biological connection only, or is it someone else? And then he looks around at the people sitting around him. And that's when he finally tells us about the fellowship that you have if you are in Christ. Okay. He ends with this statement, if we had the call of the family that opens the account, it moves on to the question of family and faith and what is the real connection? He finally ends up with the creation of fellowship.

Looking around to those who sat around him, He said, here are my mother and brothers. For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and my sister and my mother. You see, this is a profound and beautiful statement about the creation of new fellowship in light of faith in Jesus Christ. Okay, notice what he's saying here. He's a bit of a celebrity. Everyone's trying to get close to him. They're trying to get close. Maybe he'll heal them. Maybe he'll teach them something about the word that they don't understand. Maybe he'll. He'll say something prophetic to them about their lives. Everyone wants to get close. And yet the assumption is, well, clearly your family has access to you, Jesus. Clearly, everybody else needs to get in the

back of the line when your family steps up to talk to you. But notice what Jesus says. He says that's actually not the case. Those are not the closest to whom I am bound, but rather it is those who do the will of the father. You notice he doesn't say those who, um, kind of throw in their lot with me. He doesn't say those who are religious, those who know a lot of things about God. He doesn't say that. What does he say? Those who do the will of my father. And you see, that's exactly what Jesus is saving them unto by sitting at the feet of Jesus, by sitting and listening to his words, you are showing your faith in him. And what is your. What is the result of your faith that you do the will of the father. So the account begins with the family pushing in on Jesus life. Then it moves on to him, raising a question about faith, and then finally his statement, his positive statement that if you want to be in my family, you have to do the will of the father.

Notice he uses that language of us, of God, who is his father. In other words, he's saying, I'm inviting you in to a new family. You're called to hear Christ. You're called to receive Christ. You're called to trust in Christ. You're called to follow Christ. How do you know that someone has received and trusted and put their faith in Christ? Because they do the will of the father? Okay, so that's the movement of the text. I wanted to get through that quickly so we could see exactly what's going on. And now I want to get behind it and say what's actually happening here?

What is Jesus saying about the nature of his kingdom, the nature of the gospel that he's proclaiming, how it relates to families? What is he actually saying? You can take a passage like this and you can pull this away, and you could say something like, therefore I should rebel and reject my natural biological family, and I should only consider my. The church to be my family and therefore that gives me justification to. Kind of leave my biological family behind. I never liked them anyways, you know. And move on to this new community that is, you know, merely spiritual or totally. Spiritual. And I would argue that's actually not what Jesus is saying. We know from elsewhere, Jesus will quite, you know, quite clearly honor family. Okay. He'll honor his own family. He even takes time as he's on the cross to make. Sure that Mary is cared for by John. So Jesus clearly loves family. So what is he saying? How do we understand what Jesus is saying here in light of the whole of Scripture? You know, there's always this temptation just to read a text by itself and to let it sit there. And you get a lot of bad theology when you do that. You want to see a text in light of the whole story of the Bible. And so it does raise this question what is going on with family in the Bible?

Why is it that Jesus audience would have thought like, well, of course he's going to stop talking and go outside and meet with his family. It's his family, after all. What would have led them to believe that that was the case? Is this merely a kind of Gentile belief? Well, absolutely not. Of course, if we go back and we look at Scripture, we see that the family plays a major role throughout Scripture. I would even argue this. The family is the most clear and powerful theater in which the redemption of the image of God takes place. Okay, let me tell you what I mean by that. Where does family come from? It goes all the way back to the garden. Okay? It's part of that thing that's called the cultural mandate that Adam and Eve are made and they're placed in the garden, and they're told to go do some things. And one of the things they're told to do is to fill the earth, right, with little images of God and to subdue it. Well, how are they

going to fill the earth? Well, Genesis chapter two tells us this. It's through marriage and then through having children, they will fill the earth. As a matter of fact, Genesis two says, and that's why it is that a man leaves his family and cleaves to his wife, right? So that he can do this thing, which is having a family. This is just a part of being human. It's a pre-fall thing. You go out and you are a part of filling the earth with little image bearers. Do you have to be married to do that? No. You can be in the ministry of the church helping families as they raise up children. You can be working in nurseries, you can be mentoring young men and young women. That is all a part of this work of filling the earth. Now we might say, well, yeah, that's before the fall. That's what families did before the fall. But after the fall, that's not the case. But actually, we see that even after the fall, Adam and then Noah again are actually told, no, still do this, fill the earth, multiply. How will the image of God go all over this grand temple of the earth that the Lord has made? So it can reflect back his glory? It's going to happen through families. But then we see because of sin, there's a breakdown because of sin. Family is not a failsafe. Or rather, it's not. It's not a perfect way to move forward. The work of redemption, of spreading, spreading the image of God over the face of the earth. As a matter of fact, in the very first family we see a little breakdown, don't we? As Adam and Eve are ejected from the garden and the cherubim is put there to block it, they have two children. These children are blessings to them. These are not curses. They are blessings. Eve even calls her first son, Cain. Cain because I cleaned him, I received him from the Lord. And what happens to the two children of the two children, you have one who is a believer and one who is not. Now how are we supposed to respond to that? Did the family break down? Did it not work? No, that's not what happened. But it's deeply tragic that one of those children is not a believer. You see, the natural theater in which redemption is passed on in human existence is from family to family. But there are times, even starting with the very first family, when you have this tragic breakdown and one of the children, one of the children of the covenant, as Cain was, turns away from the faith and rejects it, and that's considered a terrible, tragic thing. That we fast forward now to Abraham. Abraham becomes the father of the family, out of whom redemption will come. As humans are spreading over the face of the earth, the Lord chooses one family and he says, out of you, Abraham. I will bring blessings to all the families of the earth now. Why does he choose Abraham? Because. Is it because Abraham was born of a specific family? No, it's because of faith. Faith alone says in Genesis fifteen And Abraham believed, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Paul tells us Abraham is saved in exactly the way you are saved through believing in Jesus Christ. And yet, excuse me, Jesus Christ has yet to come by believing in God to fulfill his promises that we know will be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. So by believing Abraham now begins a new line. He begins a line of covenant children. So what happens next? He has a covenant child, and the covenant passes on to him in Isaac. And then Isaac has covenant children, right? Jacob and Esau in the covenant passes on to Jacob. Now we don't know that Esau is not saved. He's just not a covenant head, right? But the covenants are passing on from father to child. And yet we see in each case it is not merely because they are the child of the father, that they are saved, that they receive the blessing, but rather they have to believe. They have to be faithful. Their covenant enjoyment of the covenant. Blessings are not made efficacious merely because they are the child of their father, but rather they have to have personal faith themselves. We see this over and over and over again with almost every

generation. There are those children who are raised in the covenant teachings of the father. And they believe, and there are those who rebel. It's even true of Israel, the nation of Israel, as they're coming out of Egypt. You remember, we have multiple rebellions that take place as the people are leaving out of Egypt, and these are Israelites. These are people in the line of Moses or in the line of Abraham. They've been circumcised on the eighth day. They've done it all right. And yet they don't believe. And as a result, in one case the earth swallows them up, and another. The Levites take out swords and put them to death. Because even though they are in the bloodline of Abraham, that's not the ground of their salvation. It was always faith. We're then told, as we fast forward in this very quick survey of the notion of covenant families, that Jeremiah and Jeremiah thirty one thirty two thirty three, where he's talking about the new covenant that is to come, and all of the blessings that will be a part of it. He says, guess what? And in this new covenant, just like in the old, your children will be a part of it too. Jeremiah thirty one seventeen. He's clearly talking about the new covenant that is yet to come. He says their children shall be as they were of old, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all who oppress them. Notice. Even the children of the Israelites will be blessed in the New Covenant. But again, is it ever just by bloodline? No. Absolutely not. It's by faith. It's made efficacious by faith. It's hard for us to understand because people often say, is it faith or is it or is it because of your being raised by your parents or something like that? Is it because of who your biological parents were? Well, God actually chooses to make the family be the center out of which faith flourishes. So when we baptize a little baby up here in the New Covenant, right? Which according to Jeremiah is for you and for your children also, according to Peter in acts two. It's for you and for your children. When we baptize a baby. We don't think that we are somehow forcing on this baby salvation. But what are we doing? We are welcoming them into the covenant community by which they might have faith. So his family a wonderful thing. Is it a powerful thing? It is a gift. Is it a gift from God? Absolutely. Absolutely it is. It's the theatre of redemption on earth. It's where God is moving forward. His kingdom. It's where he is building his church. And yet, just like with Abraham, who was not a believer and not from a believing family, but believed and therefore started a new covenant line, we look to start new covenant lines all over the place. We want New covenant families springing up by faith out of Birmingham and out of India, and out of Israel and out of North Africa and out of China. We want to see New Covenant families where there was no covenant family. Now a new covenant family is springing up. You see, the Lord has a great love and concern for the family. So what is Jesus saying here? What is Jesus saying here? He's saying this. Do not confuse however, the bloodline for the ground of your salvation. If you are in the family of God, if you can call the father son, that is because a spirit of sonship is within you and you are crying out, ABBA, father, you are now a child of God, right? And that only happens. That's only made efficacious by faith. So if I have faith, whether I am a child, whether I am a teenager, whether I am an adult, I am in the family of God. For those who are biologically connected to me but do not have faith, we should not, you know, don't miss this point. They are less connected to you than you are to the others who have the same faith that you have. Again, we know that Mary, she's a follower of Christ. She will be. We don't know what's going on with her now, but she will be one day. We know that that Jude and that James will be followers of Christ one day. We don't know where they are at this point in the story. But you see what Jesus is saying here. He's saying, don't think

that it was always because of bloodline. It's not because of bloodline. That's not my closest connection. If you want to have the closest connection a human can have, it's not through biological families, but rather it's those who are united to me by faith. That's where the closest connection is. That's the deepest connection between humans. All right, so what does that look like? How is it? How can we say that that's the case? Is this just something we take on faith and we don't really understand it, but we can just take it on faith. Well, of course we have to take it on faith. But there's more to it than just that. We can put more details on this. How are we? Let me give us three ways that we are more closely connected as believers than we are to our unbelieving family members. The first one is this we have a shared allegiance, okay? Allegiance is a powerful way to bind people together, right? Having shared allegiances. Okay, think about how what would happen even right now if I told a joke that diminished either Alabama or Auburn football teams. Right? Okay, think about what could happen in this group because you feel the power of allegiances, right? Okay. Imagine if we're not talking about a football game or we're not talking about a political party, or we're not talking about a basketball team. Okay. To bring it a little closer to home right now, this time of year. Right. But we're talking about the Lord of the universe, okay? In my biological family, our allegiance is maybe to the patriarch or to the matriarch, maybe to continuing the family name. That's important, but that's not the most important thing. I wonder if we have a shared allegiance to the creator of the universe. You see how that binds us together more closely? Okay, you think about the different levels of allegiances that you have in your life, allegiances that you're willing wonderfully again, to use. Alabama and Auburn as an example. You're willing to leave at the door and come in together and worship with one another, right? Because you recognize levels of allegiances. See, Jesus is saying, if you are united to me by faith, if you are doing the will of God, if you're doing the will of my father, you have a more close allegiance than you have to a mere biological relative. Of course, the world says, well, that's not true. Family is the biggest connection you can have in Christ is saying no, actually, faith is the deepest connection you can have. So we have a shared allegiance, a shared person who we are looking to. And that is Jesus Christ as he images the father. Right? That's what we're looking to. That's our shared allegiance. We also have a shared continuity, a shared end. Okay. In other words, continuity of time. We are living unto the same end. If I'm looking at my biological family member who's not a believer. Okay, what am I doing? I'm hoping and I'm praying we'll come back around to that later because the Lord has providentially put me in that family. I'm hoping and praying that they do become united with Christ by faith. But in the meantime, we have two different ends to our life. They will end in the absence and isolation and what Jesus calls the outer darkness, right? They will end in judgment. I will end in favor and grace in abundant life forever and ever on earth, in a new heavens and a new earth arrangement where I have a resurrected body. We have two very different ends. That's the tragedy, right? That's the tragedy of Cain and Abel that we see right away that right away you have two brothers and one goes one way and one goes the other. It's a tragedy when covenant families are broken up in that way, and yet it's a reality. You see, there's something to the fact. And you get to experience this when you do missions, when you go overseas, when you get to worship in a church that's not an American church where they're not speaking English and they're singing songs you've never heard before, and you sit down and you have this realization that I have more in common with

these people sitting around me worshiping Jesus by another name than I have in common with my unbelieving relative back home, who I grew up with. That's what Jesus is saying. He's saying when you've been there ten thousand years. Bright shining as the sun. And you've got no less days to sing his praise. Than when you first begun. You might turn to your left and see a Chinese brother or sister who in this life never even spoke the same language as you, and sang different worship songs and had a totally different experience by faith. And yet you're more closely bound to them than you are to the relative who you grew up wearing their hand-me-down clothes and playing with them in the backyard. See, Jesus says, this is what it means to be in the family of Christ, is to have the same allegiance, is to have the same endpoint, the same eschatology. But then lastly, and perhaps most significantly for us now, as we await that eschatology, we're not living in that now. But perhaps most importantly, we have to recognize that the connections of biological family. That physical DNA that connects us to one another is not as deep in regards to our identity as the spiritual DNA that we all share being united with the risen Christ. Okay, there is something about our faith and how it unites us with the risen Christ that even now, as we look at each other and we look into each other's eyes, we are not just seeing the person, but we're seeing the Christ who now indwells us in a way that physical DNA never actually could. You see, there's a new people.

Remember what Paul said back when we were reading Ephesians last fall? He says, there's a new man. There's old the old men, old humanity, but now there's a new humanity. And that new humanity is united with Christ through the power of the spirit. There is something. It's intangible. It's ephemeral. And yet what I mean by that, it's hard to describe. It's hard to put your finger on, and yet you have a connection that you will feel with fellow Christians that you have no good reason to feel. But it's just Jesus. It's just your shared experience of the risen Christ. You see, Jesus says when he hears his. Perhaps, as I said, we don't know where they are right now, but they're acting like unbelievers. They're not in the house with him, listening to him teach. They're out there saying, come on, Jesus, stop. What are you out of your mind? And when he hears them calling, he says, I've got more connection here. I've got more familial, uh, affection here than I do with those people outside. The reason why I'm telling you this, why are we focusing in on this tonight? Is it not to say. And these are all the reasons why you should break things off with your biological family. That's not what I'm saying at all. What I'm saying is this.

When you gather together in church, I want you to recognize this is your family. Ask yourself, how can I care for my family? When you get together. Okay. You can talk about basketball. You can talk about March Madness. That's okay. But don't just talk about March Madness, right? Ask questions that brothers might ask of each other. Women, when you gather together, talk to each other like sisters and like mothers who are raising up daughters. Because this is your family. When you wrestle with squabbles and infighting, as all families have, look for ways for reconciliation. Because don't forget, these are the people with whom you will be enjoying the imperishable body of the new heavens and new earth and worshiping the Heavenly Father. Or why is it that Paul and the apostles focused so much on us reconciling together because we are an eternal family. So look for ways to connect as a family. Look for ways to care for one another. By the way, if you're here and you're just exhausted and you just came in because

you're like, I just want to hear hope and you're just going to slip out the door right afterwards and you're not going to talk to someone around here like they're your family. That's okay. I'm glad you're here. But I would encourage you in the weeks and the months ahead, look for ways to be strengthened by your family here. Look for ways to be deeply connected to your family.

Now, as we close, let me just say one word because you need to say this about the biological family. As I said, the biological family is going all the way back to Genesis one and Genesis two. This is the way the Lord chose. He pleased. He was pleased by his own good pleasure to make this be the way in which his image was. It would expand over the face of the earth. Okay, biological family is hugely powerful, both in the ways that it blesses us and the ways that it hurts us. Okay, I know that not all biological families here on earth are healthy families. What is the Lord calling us to in regard to our family?

First of all, he's calling us to this. You have a family in Christ. Don't think that because your biological family is broken, that you're not going to get to experience what it means to have a healthy family. You have a family in Christ. Come in fully, live out and enjoy your identity here as a member of the family of Christ. Secondly, God has providentially, for one reason or another, has put you in this context. He's put you amongst these family members. I would commit to prayer. Lord, why is it that you have put me here? What would you have me do? How would you have me show them the gospel of Jesus Christ? You can honor your biological family. You can honor your biological parents even if they've been abusive parents, that doesn't mean you go and become an enabler to their abuse. But what does it mean you do? Do you pray? You say, Lord, how can I properly honor the family while still being firm to my commitments? Being firm to my belief in you. Recognizing my identity within the body of Christ, how can I also now still seek in some way to present to them Jesus Christ? I think we have a special call to our families. The Lord's put us there, and when we are able, we should look for opportunities to proclaim Christ to them. We're not supposed to just cut them off and ignore them and leave them in their lostness. Okay?

And for some of you, this is going to be a lifelong project, okay? You're going to have decades of talking to people who are not listening. And you know what? That's okay. That's why the Lord puts you there. But do remember this. That is not where your ultimate identity lies. It's not in your biological family. It's a wonderful theatre out of which faith can blossom and grow, because families that are raised in faith tend to develop and to produce children who are raised by faith. And that's a wonderful thing. And yet at the same time, remember that your identity is in the ones with whom you are united by your faith in Jesus Christ. That is a deep, deep spiritual connection. And it's a great cause for us as we come together as a church, to seek ways to be reconciled, to encourage, to support, and to mutually glorify Christ together. Let's close in prayer.

Heavenly father, as we do, consider the family of God and how we only have standing in this family because you loved us. It's not an arbitrary thing. Lord, it has nothing to do with our bloodlines. It has nothing to do with our characteristics or strengths, dear Lord, or our weaknesses. You just loved us. And that kind of unconditional love is amazing and it's encouraging and it strengthens us, Lord. But I pray that we would find our rest in it through the

power of the spirit. Dear Lord, I pray that we would have spirits of sonship so that when we come to you and say, ABBA Father, we would mean it because we would recognize that we are members of the family of Christ. Strengthen us, Lord, as we care for one another in that way. I also pray, Lord, that you would give us special insight, special encouragement, and special blessing in the way that we care for the families of this earth that you have given us. For unbelieving members, whether it's siblings or parents or children or even extended relatives. Lord, give us the grace to make the most of those relationships that we might present to them. Christ, we pray this in Christ's name.

Amen.