

Sermon for October 7, 2012 – Pentecost 19*

Hebrews 2:9-11

Theme: Jesus is not ashamed to call us family.

- 1) *Consider what Jesus did to make us family.*
- 2) *Consider what we can do for our family because we are a part of His.*

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰ In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. ¹¹ 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.

I think it is obvious that the institutions of marriage and family are in danger in our society. What is less obvious is where the greatest threat lies. It is not found in homosexual marriage, rampant internet pornography, or countless shows like *Desperate Housewives*, *Modern Family*, and *2 and ½ Men* that proclaim the world's new morality. Now don't get me wrong: these are all grave threats to the institution of the family and need to be warned against. But the greatest threat is something you will never see on TV or read about in the newspaper. The greatest threat to the estate of marriage and family is our own sinful hearts!

Why are there so many divorces? It's because many people do not know what it means to love unselfishly. Husbands make jokes about "the old ball and chain" at home. Women gossip about the good-for-nothing husband they have. Both men and women complain about how their "needs" aren't being met. And then there is the breakdown of the family. Parents sometimes yell at their children just for being children – punishing them when they shouldn't, and then failing to discipline them when they should. It is impossible for me to enumerate the examples I have seen of husbands and wives acting selfishly towards one another, and children being disrespectful to their parents, and parents being harsh towards their children.

Now you might say: "I am not that way with my spouse or children." Notice I didn't say that any of you were. I said that this danger lurks in our hearts, because everybody's heart is selfish and evil. The potential is always there.

So how do we defend our families and marriages from our own evil hearts? By considering the heart of our dear brother – Jesus. **He is not ashamed to call us family.** 1) *Consider what Jesus did to make us family.* 2) *Consider what we can do for our family because we are a part of His.*

Part One: *Consider what Jesus did to make us family.*

Human love is selfish. If I were to ask any of you why you love your husband or wife, you would probably tell me that it is because how they treat you and then might point to some specific things they do for you. This illustrates the truth that people, by and large, only love those who express it back, or offer it only if they can benefit emotionally. Here's another example: People are often encouraged to give to charity. Why? So that they can "feel good" about themselves for helping someone else. Human love is selfish.

But what about Christ's love for us? When he looked at us before the creation of the world, did he say to his heavenly Father: "Father, I love them because they will be so nice to us. Look at how well they will love and obey us. We ought to love them because of how good they are to us.?" This was certainly not the conversation Jesus had with his Father. When Jesus looked into the future, he saw people who would rebel against God and hate him. He saw people who would be self-serving in all their ways and hurt others with their sinful actions. And yet how did Jesus respond? He decided to love us and committed himself to saving us. Just think: Jesus is true God and Lord over all. He could have said, "To hell with mankind and his selfishness" and started over from scratch, creating a new world. But instead, driven by a love that found no reason in us but was purely a decision of His own will, God decided to be merciful and save us. And the only way he could do that was by taking on human flesh and blood.

And so we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰ In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.

Jesus, our true God and LORD, made himself lower than angels. He made himself a man, in order to save mankind. And why did he do this? So that he could be under the law just like we are. You see, only perfect people are allowed in the presence of God. Sinners will be eternally condemned. Now here is the problem: we are not perfect, but full of sin. And this is where Jesus comes in. First of all, while under the law, he was able to keep every commandment we broke. Then he took all our sins upon himself and suffered the punishment we deserve. In love he tasted death for everyone so that everyone might live through faith in him.

When we believe in Jesus for forgiveness, we are clothed with his righteousness – his perfect record of no sin. When God looks at believers, he sees his Son and declares them to be His children. Why? Because our sins died with Jesus on the cross.

Let me address a difficult section of our sermon text. Verse 10 reads: *In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.* What does it mean that the author of our salvation was *made perfect* through suffering? Well, let me begin by saying that our English Bible does not do a good job translating this text. The word “perfect” is literally “complete” or “finished”. The word “author” is really the word “pioneer or champion.” In other words Jesus, salvation’s pioneer, trail blazer and champion, completed and finished his work of being our Savior through suffering. And what suffering was that? His suffering and death on the cross. And this was God’s will for him to do, so that we all might be saved through him.

What is another result of Jesus taking on human flesh and blood for our salvation? It is that *both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family.* In other words, because Jesus (who is true God from eternity) was born, he is part of our family – the human race. Isn’t that marvelous? God the Son lowered himself to be one of us – a human being! *Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers.*

Jesus is not ashamed of us, even though we often are ashamed of him. Even though we sin daily by ignoring his call to spend time with him in prayer and meditate on his word, even though we might be too ashamed of Jesus to tell friends and family about Him because of what they might think about us, Jesus is not ashamed of us. He is not ashamed of how sinful we are – how selfish and unloving. He has forgiven it all. And because Jesus has forgiven all our sins, He is not ashamed to call us family.

Part Two: *Consider what we can for our family because we are a part of His.*

Now some of you might be thinking: “How does the fact that Jesus saved me so unselfishly protect my marriage and family from my selfish heart? Is it that Jesus’ unselfishness is an example I ought to pattern? Is that the point?” My answer to that is: Yes and no. Yes, Jesus is an example of unselfish love, but no his “example” is not what protects our spouse, children and family from our selfish hearts. If not his example, then what does? His salvation.

You see Jesus saved us, not only from sin and for a future home in heaven, he also saved us so that we could be his brothers now. He saved us so that we could live for him by loving others.

When the Holy Spirit brought us to faith in Jesus, He also created in us a new heart - a new man - that wants to please God. We are God’s children through faith. That new heart does not want to act selfishly towards its spouse and children: demanding that every need and wish be met. Rather it desires to love like Christ loved us. It is filled with compassion and loves even when that love is not returned.

Now someone might say: “Wait a minute. At the beginning of the sermon you said the biggest threat to marriage and family is found in the heart, and now you are saying the best protection against the heart is found in the heart. That does not make sense.” It does if you think of it this way: the greatest threat to our families is found in the heart of sinful man, but the best defense is found in the heart of Christ, which the Holy Spirit gives to us through faith.

We have two natures inside of us: an old sinful nature, and a new righteous man. Our sinful nature wages war against the new man, wanting to make us selfish, wanting us to treat others as our servants. But our new man wants to serve others out

of genuine love. These two natures are bitterly opposed to each other. So how do we protect ourselves from our Old Adam? By going to Christ in prayer and repentance. When we seek God in prayer and repentance, we drown that old Adam, and the new man arises in us. With our selfish nature bound and in check, we can live like Christ – reflecting to others the same unselfish love Jesus shone on us.

But be careful. Our sinful nature keeps breaking free from the bonds of repentance that tie him up. He seizes every opportunity he can get to regain control of our lives. This is why we need to be in constant prayer to God, and meditating on the Gospel which reminds us of the love God has for us in Christ. This is how we protect ourselves from the greatest enemy to marriage and family: our own sinful heart.

Now you noticed in this sermon I did not give a lot of specifics as to how our selfish hearts can tear a marriage or a family apart. I do not think I have to explain this, because I am sure that it is obvious to every Christian who considers his heart on the basis of Scripture.

But the bond that keeps a marriage and family together and safe is the same bond that unites us to Christ and our heavenly family: his grace and love for us.

Brothers and sisters in Christ. Jesus is not ashamed to call us family. Look at what Jesus did so that we could become members of his family. Consider what you can do for others because you are a member of His family. Let Christ's love guide all your actions and attitudes in your marriages, and then you will have the best defense against the most dangerous threat facing your family: your own selfish heart. Amen.