

Sermon June 6th 2021
Mark 3:20 to end
The Unforgiveable Sin and Who is my Family

This passage in Mark covers a couple of very important issues. The first one is that because Jesus has done a lot of miracles, including getting demons out of people, rumours have started flying around. One of the things we noticed immediately when we moved into [Robertsbridge] was that rumours abound in small communities. [I bet you get rumours in school about different people sometimes as well]. Rumours can be harmless and even funny. I lost count of the number of people that told me that they had been the very first person to know which house was going to be the new vicarage. Once though, someone spread a really nasty rumour about me. It was very hurtful because it was a lie and said that I had done the very opposite of what I had actually done. The person who started the rumour told a lot of people that I had deliberately done something bad to her, whereas the truth was that I had done everything that I could to prevent the bad thing, even though it wasn't down to me, I had tried to help, and I got the blame instead for something I didn't do. People who knew me knew that it wasn't true. But quite a few people who didn't know me very well believed the rumour and it was only when they really got to know me that they realised that I wouldn't do the horrible thing that I had been accused of.

Well, this was exactly what was happening to Jesus. He was doing only the good things that God the Father told Him to do and some people were saying that He was doing those things because He was evil and that it was Satan, the devil who was helping Him and not God! Other people were saying that Jesus had lost His mind and was mentally ill and these were the rumours that His family had heard and they travelled a long way to try and take Him home and help Him. The first thing Jesus did was to say to the people that the rumour about Satan just didn't make sense – why would the devil work against himself and get rid of demons. And Jesus warned them very sternly to be careful. All

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sins can be forgiven he told them but if you blaspheme – speak badly about the Holy Spirit, that can't be forgiven. People sometimes get very worried and upset about this unforgivable sin but what Jesus meant was that if you truly believe and you say that the Holy Spirit who was in Jesus and is in us is evil and from the devil not from God, then you can't come in to God's presence, because the Holy Spirit is from God and is just like God the Father and Jesus God's son, He is totally pure and good and loving and if you don't know that, you don't know Him at all.

Then Jesus is told that His mother and His brothers are at the door asking for Him and He says something very strange. He says, "who are my Mother and my brothers?" and then He looked at all the people and said, "you are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does what God wants them to do is my brother, sister and mother."

Is there anyone here that has ever called someone Aunty who isn't really their aunt at all? When I was young we always called our parents close friends aunty and uncle. It doesn't happen so much now. But it is still true that there can be people who belong to our family who aren't actually related to us by blood. It might be that they are married to a member of the family, or they might be someone who is very close to us. My grandmother didn't have any children. She was my Dad's stepmother. She married my Grandad and never had any children, but she was still my grandmother and I loved her just as much as my Grandad who was my blood relation. Sometimes we choose who is a part of our family and sometimes we have no choice.

Jesus was not saying that our related family are not important! God has given them to us to look after and we should always do that if we can. But He was saying that as Christians we have another family, a Spiritual family. God has made us His children and so we are spiritually related to all His other children

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– to each other. And as well as having responsibilities to our natural families, we have responsibilities towards our church family as well. God wants us to look after each other, look out for each other, help each other to grow, warn each other when we are doing things wrong, protect each other. And not listen to gossip and rumours about each other, (or about anyone for that matter), all the things that we would do for members of our natural family. He is not saying that our church family are more important, but he is saying that they are very important. And he knows that it won't always be easy. Does anyone here have a family member who is really difficult in some way? If you don't you are very lucky, because it happens in most families at some point. And it happens in our church family as well. But we always have a choice about how we behave. Sometimes we make the wrong choice. Sometimes we get angry and react to things, instead of calming down and talking about them, especially talking about them with God. We all get it wrong sometimes. But we don't have to let how another person is make a difference to how we behave. We can choose how we behave. We can ask God to help us to behave the way He wants us to. Remember Jesus said that we are His brothers and sisters when we do what God wants. So even if someone is being nasty to us, or spreading rumours about us, or just being a pain, we can still be kind and patient and loving. We can tell someone they are wrong, and we can ask them to stop behaving badly but we can do it kindly and if they don't stop, we can ask the Holy Spirit to help us to forgive them. Like I said, we won't always get it right, but hopefully the more we get to know Jesus and what He is really like and the more we ask God how He wants us to behave, what He wants us to do, the better we will get at it and the better we will be at loving all our families, the ones we are born into, the ones we choose and our spiritual family, our brothers and sisters in Jesus.