



# SAINT ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

306 N. Division Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104 • (734) 663-0518 • [www.standrewsaa.org](http://www.standrewsaa.org)

## Sermon for Sunday, June 10, 2018

*The Third Sunday after Pentecost*

FR. ALAN GIBSON

Genesis 3:8-15 | Psalm 130 | 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1 | Mark 3:20-35

In the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Families are funny things. Or as a friend of mine, who comes from a sprawling Italian family, would say, “If it’s not one thing, it’s your mother.”

We know very little about Jesus’ family, other than he had one. If he indeed, “lived as one of us,” as one Eucharistic Prayer proclaims, then, like us he at times found his family to be a source of great joy and comfort, and at other times a source of irritation. We see a glimpse of this in today’s gospel.

It is early on in Jesus’ ministry. He has set up a base in Capernaum, about 15 miles from his childhood home in Nazareth. He has caused something of a stir with his preaching. A few healing miracles started to draw small crowds of those seeking relief. He befriended outcasts and other individuals that polite society found questionable. And in the midst of all of this Jesus had just chosen his inner circle – the twelve who would soon start travelling with him and be the recipients of his private teachings. Jesus is getting noticed. So much so that he caught the unfavorable attention of the religious authorities in far-off Jerusalem. Jesus is poised to break out from being a local curiosity to a national figure.

And then, Mom shows up, with his brothers in tow. You gotta know they didn’t want to be there. They had their own stuff to deal with. But Mary, being a mother and the glue that kept the family together, compelled her other sons to go with her and save their big brother from himself. Something tells me this wasn’t the first time they had been dragged into such a mission. As they arrive, Jesus puts out one of his most controversial teachings.

The subject of Sin and what can be done about it is at the root of everything Jesus was and is. His call shows us the path to repentance. His sacrifice breaks sin’s power over us. And in him we are brought from death to life. Jesus did not remove sin from the world, but through him we can find forgiveness and be reconciled to God. Except for one, one sin that not even Jesus can make right – the sin against the Holy Spirit, to say that the work of God is the work of the Devil. Or as one theologian describes it: to say that “evil is good, ugliness

beauty, and falsehood truth; and so the workings of the Holy Spirit appear ... as madness.” (T.W. Mason, *The Sayings of Jesus*, p. 110). A person who does that puts themselves beyond even Jesus’ reach.

So what does this dire saying have to do with families and a mother’s concern for her first-born? I think it has a lot to do with them. Families, whether they are the nuclear ones we are born into, or the ones we create out of necessity and longing are the strongest and most stable human bonds we will ever know. Stronger than nations and empires, stronger than armies and the weapons they deploy, stronger than any ambition or innovation that may spring from the fire of the human soul – families; and Jesus wants us to be part of his. “Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother,” regardless of what mistakes they make, sins they commit, or blasphemies they utter, they are still part of the family. That is a more generous offer than many human families sometimes make.

I don’t think it is an accident that Jesus talks about the one thing he can’t touch while his biological family stands outside the door hoping to quietly whisk him away. He’s not criticizing them for trying to protect him, he’s inviting everyone to enter into his protection and see themselves as members of the strongest of families – the family of God.

When compared with the alternative the admission requirements are really alarmingly low. That’s probably what bothered the Scribes who wanted to keep their grip on power and tried to discredit Jesus by consigning him to Satan’s camp. We are always the ones who run the risk of setting impossible conditions which only come back to hurt us. Jesus says, do the will of God - Love, Heal, Forgive – and you’re in. That may sound like an impossible task, but trying to live a life that doesn’t embrace that work would be a living hell, and ultimately very lonely.

Families are funny things. I’ll take God’s family, fully equipped with its joys and irritations, any day.