

Infectious: Unlikely Candidates

Reconnect – May 10, 2009

Text: I Peter 3:13-18; Colossians 4:5-6

Key Thought: The life we have with Jesus will naturally become apparent and spread to our families, if we will do our part and let God do His.

Now, who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't be afraid and don't worry. Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if you are asked about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it. But you must do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak evil against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ. Remember, it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong. Christ also suffered when he died for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners that he might bring us safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit. (I Peter 3:13-18, NLT)

Pre-Intro: piggy followup

- This is how it spreads... we found evidence... yummy pork chops... [picture of kid kissing pig]

Intro: family, family!

- Since today is Mother's Day, and we're talking about family today, I thought it would be good to get some thoughts from others on the family:

Family: A social unit where the father is concerned with parking space, the children with outer space, and the mother with closet space. - Evan Esar

Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family. Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one. - Jane Howard

The family. We were a strange little band of characters trudging through life sharing diseases and toothpaste, coveting one another's desserts, hiding shampoo, borrowing money, locking each other out of our rooms, inflicting pain and kissing to heal it in the same instant, loving, laughing, defending, and trying to figure out the common thread that bound us all together. - Erma Bombeck

You don't choose your family. They are God's gift to you, as you are to them. - Desmond Tutu

- Family is a word that has so much baggage associated with it today, for so many different reasons
- It has such a large place in our lives – it makes such an imprint, for better or for worse – and really, the mom is the epitome of family – she “knows you the best, and loves you anyway!”
- Some of us today are surrounded by family, and we would never want it or imagine it any other way
- Others are far from family today, either geographically or relationally distant
- And still others are searching for family, wherever they might find it and whatever form it might take
- And because of all the different places we come from on this, it can be hard to hear Desmond Tutu's words, about how your family is God's gift to you, and you are His gift to them
- Many times, it feels like the answer to that is, “Um... thanks – a LOT”

A change in the family

- And then, into that whirlwind of feelings, so close to the bone, so much a part of us – comes a new ingredient
- Sometimes we've grown up with it as part of our lives, sometimes it's shared among family members, and other times it hits us completely, seemingly randomly, and changes us
- No, I'm not talking about a genetic abnormality – I'm talking about a faith journey, an experience with God, a spiritual awakening to His Son, Jesus
- And if families didn't have enough guilt already built into them, well, there comes a whole new level
- "Am I being a good 'witness'? Do they see a change in me? Why do I seem like I'm no different when I'm around them? Why can't they see the change in me? Why won't they accept who I'm becoming?"
- And then if you're the parent, well, there's the whole, "Will they follow in my footsteps? Am I doing everything I need to be doing? Why can't they just make a good choice for once? He better not decide to marry HER!" and so on, and so on
- How can you and I effectively, meaningfully share such an important, crucial part of our lives with the people who mean the most to us? A part that has such incredible consequences for living and dying? And how can we do it in such a way that we're not making things worse than if we had never, ever even said anything?

Good questions

- People have been asking these questions for two thousand years – and every time the beginnings of faith have been planted inside a new family circle, they get asked again
- The Apostle Peter had seen situation after situation like this, as he had gone all over the known world with the message of the love of God through Jesus to people who had never, ever heard of it before
- And at one point, in his letter to people coming out of a very formal, clearcut, similar religious situation, who now find themselves in very different circumstances, he gives some great advice that can be put to this very use – and I thought we'd take a closer look at that on this Mother's Day

A Closer Look: I Peter 3:13-18

Now, who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't be afraid and don't worry. Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life.

- Live the life – do good, do the right thing – but don't be afraid and don't worry – you WILL make mistakes, you WILL fall short, but God is bigger than that
- Fear can be crippling: "maybe I just shouldn't say anything yet... or at all..."
- "worship" – not a word for "inside the church building" or for ritual, or singing, or strange rites – it's a word that is about lifestyle – everything "else" OUTSIDE the building

And if you are asked about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it. But you must do this in a gentle and respectful way.

- Be ready to speak – in the right way
- Peter wrote the phrase, “seasoned with salt” – salt was so valuable – preserving meat, giving a unique taste – treated as currency in many spots – “seasoned with salt” means attractive, tangy, having great value and effectiveness
- Faith is personal – we get taught faith is personal, and what’s personal is private, and what’s private is secret, and secrets have to be kept
- ****the oldtimers called it “testimony”** – a courtroom word – the story told by an eyewitness, someone who saw, someone who was part of what happened, what’s in question – people don’t get called to testify that don’t have a story to tell – and with Jesus moving towards the centre of your life, yes ,you have a great story

Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak evil against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ. Remember, it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong.

- Keep going, even when it’s hard
- God has placed you in your family for a purpose – embrace it, or at least do the best you can
- If you’re changing, there’s ultimately nothing you can do to hide it from the people that know you the best
- **Help:** community – bringing friends into your life – your “church family” – not to replace your family, but to help you continue to grow, and to be a body of people to represent to your family what you are becoming

Key Thought:

The life we have with Jesus will naturally become apparent and spread to our families, if we will do our part and let God do His.

“Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be gracious and attractive, so that you will have the right response for everyone.”

(Colossians 4:5-6, NLT)

- But there’s one more part still to read

Christ also suffered when he died for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners that he might bring us safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit.

Conclusion: example of Jesus (I have a friend...)

- Blended family – large, lots of brothers and sisters
- Grew up different – different dad than the rest
- Went into the family business as the oldest – contractor – his dad passed away during that time – he worked away into his thirties, but knew deep down that there was something more
- His mother worried about him, didn't want him to change, felt it was too risky a choice, that there was too much that was too uncertain
- His brothers thought he was uppity to even consider not being part of the family business in the first place – they made fun of him, like brothers do, and laughed him to scorn
- But he took the plunge – left the family business, struck out on his own, approached others to help him in his new venture – and it started to take root, and he found more and more success
- He becomes a household name – people seek him out from all over
- And still – his family thinks he's crazy – they try to have him declared insane and put under their care, even in the time just before his greatest triumph
- They never, ever see things his way – until after he dies – and then what he's been trying to convince them about finally takes hold – they see with fresh eyes everything he's gone through, what he's been able to accomplish – and they finally see him in a different light
- My friend's name, in case you haven't already figured it out, is Jesus – he's been where you and I are when it comes to family
- He knows what it is to suffer embarrassment and pain, especially in such a family-oriented, respect for elders culture as the one he was a part of – and to have the courage to even respectfully go against his family's wishes
- And yet, He also knew that God was doing something in Him, and that God was going to do something THROUGH him, if he would hold on, be patient, do his best and let everything else take its course
- **Where are you at today with your family?**
 - Are you the only one with an experience of Jesus? Or maybe you THINK you are? Because, sometimes you can be surprised at who is on this journey towards faith in God...
 - Are you struggling with being able to pass on what is going on in you, to your kids? Your spouse? Other loved ones?
 - Or maybe you're the holdout – the one who's not going to give everyone else the satisfaction of seeing you "convert"
- Keep in mind – God is at work – and the fact that you're here, the fact that you and I are here together, speaks to that fact – that anyone can change, if we will have the faith to trust God to keep doing it

Response: Cry In My Heart