

Pentecost 5B  
Peace, Seattle  
June 7, 2015  
2 Cor 4:5-5:1, Mark 3:20-35

## **ALL IN THE FAMILY**

**Our ears were so tuned to that bell that we could hear it no matter where in the neighborhood we happened to be on those long summer days.**

**The designated table setter, upon finishing the task, would take the bell to the front porch and start ringing and keep ringing until the message was delivered: IT'S SUPPER TIME!**

Out we would come from neighbors' yards or down the street, from riding bikes or playing games, and homeward fly. When it came to the Kindem family, supper was serious business, and the sound of that ringing bell told us that food was about to be set out.

**So, sure as Pavlov's dogs, in we'd come to wash our hands and find our places 'round the table. And so would begin our family's liturgy of daily bread.**

Appetites were satisfied around that table; disputes were aired, prayers were said, stories told, orders given. And through all of it, our family life and identity was strengthened.

**There's a certain logic in the pairings of these two texts today. Paul talking about how we bear the story of Jesus crucified and risen in the clay jars of our lives; and then Mark speaking of Jesus' family—his brothers and sisters, and his mother.**

As the earliest written gospel story, Mark seems a bit less protective of Jesus' reputation than the other gospel writers, and that, in part, is why I find myself so attracted to his story of Jesus. Reading between the lines today we get the impression that Jesus' experience of family life was every bit as complex and freighted as our own. And somehow I find that quite comforting.

**Book-ending today's reading we find Jesus' family—caught up in the rumor mill—trying to mount an intervention because Jesus, QUOTE: "has gone out of his mind" UNQUOTE.**

**His family's angst is aided and abetted by an even more damaging accusation: that Jesus has the ability to cast out demons because he is under the control of the chief demon: Beelzebul.**

**Now it's important to notice who is leveling this accusation—in this case, says Mark, it was "the scribes who came down from Jerusalem." What are they up to?**

Jesus' ability to repair shattered lives, so carefully cataloged by Mark, gave him a quick following. Mark tells us that in response to Jesus acts of healing the clamoring for his attention was so insistent that he couldn't even sit down to supper without being interrupted.

**Each healing, each sign, provides evidence that the reign of God Jesus was sent to proclaim is here, is now, is at hand.**

For Jerusalem-based scribes, whom tradition (and Roman overlords) had made the sole arbiters of religious authority, Jesus is a problem. In their attempt to undercut his ministry they use the most

common tactic known to politics for sewing doubt about an enemy: **they accuse him of being guilty of the very thing he is fighting against.**

**Jesus, in response, puts the scribes on notice: The days of the religious status quo are numbered.**

**After all the verbal jousting, we arrive at the second bookend in today's Markan sandwich.**

Jesus' family members arrive and begin asking for him. And it's then that Jesus says something as provocative as any teaching that will come out of his mouth:

WHO ARE MY MOTHER AND BROTHERS? he asks.

Then, looking at the crowd: HERE ARE MY MOTHER AND MY BROTHERS!

WHOEVER DOES THE WILL OF GOD IS MY BROTHER AND SISTER AND MOTHER.

**Like a physician re-setting a bone that has healed wrongly, Jesus breaks the old family and religious structure so that it can be re-set as something whole and holy.**

**And in the process he redefines "family," calling for a total reorientation to the core values of God's reign—grace, compassion, forgiveness, inclusion.**

**The barriers that created insiders and outsiders have been breached.**

**The KINGDOM of God, it turns out, is a KIN-DOM—a new kind of family, formed not by blood or class or ethnicity or any other orientation, but by a common desire to do the will of God.**

**You and I are part of that KIN-DOM.**

**When Jesus meets us at Font and Table, we find ourselves affirmed and equipped to be what we he has made us—children of God, and sisters and brothers to one another.**

**But while we revel in and claim this new status, St. Paul's letter injects a note of realism. None of us, it turns out, is perfect. Each of us comes into this fellowship both with gifts and liabilities. We are earthen vessels; fragile, resilient bearers of the love of God.**

**A few months back I shared what I'd learned about a method for fixing broken pottery called kintsugi.<sup>1</sup>**

Instead of consigning cracked pottery to the trash heap, this ancient Japanese technique treats the fractured pieces with a special lacquer dusted with powdered gold, silver, or platinum.

**The result is stunning**—beautiful seams mark the places where cracks once were, giving each piece a truly unique appearance. Often enough the repaired piece ends up being even more beautiful than the original.<sup>2</sup> Isn't that amazing?

**Donna, Ruth, Heidi, Ron, Madelyn—welcome to this unique assortment of cracked-pots known as Peace Lutheran congregation!**

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<sup>1</sup> You can find my Pastor's Pen article [HERE](#), and my Easter season sermon [HERE](#).

<sup>2</sup> Use this link for visual examples: <http://www.mymodernmet.com/profiles/blogs/kintsugi-kintsukuroi>

By joining our fellowship this day, you're saying you're comfortable with this motley crew of earthen vessels. And you're saying you're ready to bring your own vessel, however brilliant, however flawed, into this collection of God's saints at Peace! Sisters and brother we welcome you!

**This past week Chris and I joined Kai's class, his teacher and other parents on a four-day camping trip on the Olympic Peninsula.**

Our first stop after hopping the ferry to Bainbridge was the new Japanese Exclusion Memorial Wall.<sup>3</sup> The wall is a beautiful tribute in wood and stone that follows the very path Bainbridge Island residents of Japanese ancestry walked, suitcases in hand, to the ferry that took them from their homes to an uncertain future, a future from which some never returned.

**The names of each family who took that unbidden journey are captured on ceramic slabs mounted on the undulating cedar wall. And in many instances fissures in those slabs separate some family members from other family members.**

**Some of us, as we experienced the wall, got to wondering whether those fissures held symbolic value.**

- Did they divide family members who returned after the war from family members who did not?
- Did they represent some other kind of division, hidden from us but known to insiders?

**We were curious.**<sup>4</sup>

**Everyone who joins our fellowship here at Peace has questions of their own.**

- Is there room for me here?
- Can I be myself among these people?
- Will who I am as a person be embraced or merely endured?
- Will my liabilities be accepted?
- Will I be able to fully utilize the gifts I bring?

**Questions such as these are ones we each find ourselves asking at times, as the Spirit works to knit us together, making our cracks and fissures into beautiful bridges into the hearts of one another and the heart of God, until, like Jesus, we can say:**

**Who are my brothers, my sisters, my mothers? You are my brothers and sisters and mothers! Christ has made us family.**

And speaking of family, it's almost Suppertime. Food will soon be on the Table. So come and get it!

Amen.

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<sup>3</sup> Photos and description of the wall project can be found here: <http://www.bijac.org/index.php?p=MEMORIALWhatsNew> Artist Steve Gardner's comments about the project can be found here: [http://gardnerart.com/?mtheme\\_portfolio=bainbridge-island-japanese-american-exclusion-memorial](http://gardnerart.com/?mtheme_portfolio=bainbridge-island-japanese-american-exclusion-memorial)

<sup>4</sup> After delivering this sermon, I received a response to my query from Steve Gardner: "I wish I had a more interesting reason for the separations of the name panels, but it was purely for practical reasons - the maximum length that I could accommodate in my kilns is about 30 inches, so anything longer than that had to be sectioned."