

God's True Family

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[0:00] Good morning, everyone. For those of you who don't know, my name is Andrew Rimm.! I am one of the pastoral interns here at Trinity Cambridge Church.! If you guys could please turn with me now to Matthew chapter 12.

Matthew chapter 12, verse 38 to 50. Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word.

Lord, more than ever, in our time and culture, in this generation, we need you.

We need your word to be permeating throughout our lives. We need your word to be dictating how we can live a faithful life to you in the face of all the darkness and unbelief around us, Lord.

So we ask you, God, by the power of your Holy Spirit, won't you illuminate this passage to us, Lord?

Give us eyes to see, ears to hear, hearts to know.

[1:27] That even amongst this generation of evil that we live in, you are still good.

You are greater than all, and you are worthy to be praised. Won't you be glorified? Won't you be magnified in the preaching of your word?

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Would you please stand with me for the reading? That does remind me, if any of you don't have a Bible and would like one, please raise your hand and we'll try to get a copy for you, for your keeping.

Matthew chapter 12, verse 38 to 50. Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.

But he answered them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

[2:45] The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah. And behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

The queen of the south will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. And behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest but finds none. And then it says, I will return to my house from which I came. And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order.

Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits, more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation.

While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brother stood outside asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him, Who is my mother?

[3:51] And who are my brothers? And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

This is God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated. Amen. Growing up, my brothers and I, my younger brothers and I, were all classically trained in music.

I played the cello. My younger brother plays the violin. And his twin brother plays the viola. And throughout my childhood, my mom would schedule practice time during the day.

And we would go into our respective rooms and for two hours practice our instruments. My mom would be around the house taking care of chores. And every once in a while, like a prison guard,

she would open our doors and check to make sure that we were practicing. But my brothers and I had a little secret. While we were practicing, we would have our phones or our iPods on our music stands. And we would watch cartoons and YouTube videos while we were practicing or when we were taking a break.

[5:13] My brothers and I had another little secret. We had unspoken understanding, a code, that we would send signs to one another, some sort of signal, if we sensed that our mom was coming to check in on us.

We confessed this on my wedding day to my parents. And my mom was flabbergasted. Sometimes it would be a quick text. Yo, mom. Quickly, put away the phone.

Start playing through my Suzuki book. Other times, a sharp cough from the next room over. Away goes my phone and I wear my Measure 24 box suite.

You know? And other times, I'd hear the hurried clatter of bows. And my brothers would quickly start playing. And that would be a clear indication. Mom's right around the corner. And so my last resort move, in that hurriedness, I'd pretend to tune my cello with a face of clear concentration of such a difficult task of tuning a cello.

But over time, I started to get cocky. I started to get overconfident in my own ability. I felt like I didn't need my brother's signs and signals anymore. And like a Jedi using the Force, I could sense my mom's presence and know when to start back up with my cello practice.

[6:29] But then one day, my mom went out of the house to go buy some groceries while we were supposed to be in practice time. The house was dead silent because all three boys were lounging in their respective rooms on their phones.

An hour passed, and suddenly, I got a message on my phone from one of my brothers. Yo, I think I saw mom's car with Pullen. I glanced out the window. I thought I saw a flash of white, but maybe that was just my imagination.

Then another text popped up. I heard the garage door opening. I listen, and I hear a low rumbling. Eh, must be the laundry machine. In my mind, I thought, there had better be a legit sign, a legitimate sign that mom was home that I can see or tangibly hear.

Else, I'm not believing my brothers. I got this. I can get away with this. Suddenly, I hear the clattering of my brother's bows, and they start playing their instruments again. And in my hubris, I thought to myself, they're just being paranoid.

Suddenly, my mom opens the door, and she finds her eldest son lounging on the bed with a cello on the ground and an iPhone in hand, busted.

[7:45] In the end, my pride and my unbelief made me overlook the obvious and abundant signs that my mom was indeed home, and I paid dearly.

What I share with you here, church, is a much sillier anecdote. But many of you guys probably have stories of your own, of similar circumstances of unbelief.

Whether it's you or someone that you know who has felt skepticism, even when all the signs seem to point to the truth of the matter. But in our stubbornness, we refuse to admit the truth, and even when the evidence and signs stack up against us, we continue to be in denial.

In our passage this morning, we encounter a more serious case of unbelief, even when the signs seem to overwhelmingly point to the truth. And that is the Pharisees and their contemporaries' denial of Jesus as the promised Messiah and the Son of God.

Their measure of unbelief leads Jesus to call them an evil and adulterous generation, and one that continues to become worse and worse in their spiritual condition.

[9:03] Church, the evil generation, that streak of unbelief that Jesus calls out in our passage, is prevalent in our age now. More than ever, we're surrounded by a culture of skepticism, skepticism of the gospel, and the culture demands signs from the Christian faith.

Prove, prove it to us that Jesus is real, that he's the way, the truth, and the life, as you guys say, that he really did die and rise from the grave. But this generation, they often demand to see these signs not because they want to believe, but because they want to confirm their unbelief.

I was right along, all along, it's not true. As Christians and as bearers of the gospel, church, we need to be aware of this evil generation of unbelief, and we need to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to guide us in not falling into that temptation of unbelief and reminding ourselves that there is

a generation that is far better than this evil one, and that's the generation that Jesus calls his family. And so this is my main point this morning. As brothers and sisters of Christ, be set apart from this evil generation of unbelief. I'll touch on three points this morning.

First, the sign for an evil generation. Second, the worsened state of the evil generation. And third, the family of Jesus. Throughout the gospel of Matthew, Matthew's been recording various miracles Jesus performed since he began this ministry in chapter 4.

[10:44] Already, he's healed diseases and afflictions and cast out demons several times within his ministry. Even within our chapter, chapter 12, Jesus has healed a man with a withered hand and healed a demon-oppressed man of his blindness and muteness with great authority, causing many to wonder, is this the Messiah, the Son of God?

But the scribes and Pharisees, out of selfish ambition and jealousy, continued to scorn Jesus and criticize his ministry. They accused Jesus of operating in his miracles of healing and exorcism by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons, as we saw in our previous passage.

Jesus proceeded to rebuke them of blaspheming the Holy Spirit in their words, showing the wickedness and unbelief in their hearts. And this sets the stage for where we are now. Verse 38, the Pharisees replied to Jesus by telling him, Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.

The Pharisees wanted to see another sign from Jesus as if everything that happened before, all those healings, all those exorcisms, meant nothing to them. Fine, teacher, if you say that you're not of Beelzebul and you say that you are of God, show us a sign.

Our own people have performed exorcisms. Our own people have been able to heal people in the past. Show us something different. Prove your worth. Their skepticism was as much as if we were to ambush a magician after the magic show, demanding him to show us real magic now that all the setups, now that all the lights, now that all the smoke has died away.

[12:26] But Jesus isn't having that. He wasn't going to pull off a miracle like some cheap party trick in front of the Pharisees at their whim in their bidding. And his response to them is sharp and clear.

Verse 39, an evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. Let's focus on the first part of Jesus' reply.

An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign. It's interesting who Jesus addresses as a whole. He could have just said, you evil and adulterous scribes and Pharisees seek a sign.

But instead, he expands the scope of his rebuke to the whole generation. An evil and adulterous generation. Jesus calls this generation evil because they seek a sign out of malicious intent.

They don't ask for a sign so that they can believe in the Messiah, but rather to destroy him. Jesus calls this generation adulterous because they're seeking a sign shows their faithlessness in the Lord God.

[13:36] That they desire to put their trust in what they see with their own eyes and not in what the Lord had promised. It's spiritual adultery. As an aside, what Jesus is not saying here is that it's evil or adulterous to seek for a sign from the Lord.

All throughout the Bible, God gave signs to people like Moses and Gideon to stir them in their faith amidst doubt and fear. In our own context, we pray to God to show us a sign, whether that's through answering our prayer requests, placing supernatural peace in our hearts about a decision to be made, or comfort amidst our sorrows or supernatural gifts of the Spirit such as healing or prophecy. What sets us, Moses and Gideon, apart from these Pharisees and scribes is that we ask for God to show his power to stir up our faith rather than to fuel our biased unbelief to ultimately scorn and reject Jesus like the Pharisees did.

That is what this generation that Jesus condemns chooses to do. This isn't Jesus' first condemnation of this generation, nor will it be his last throughout the Gospel of Matthew.

In Matthew chapter 11, Jesus calls out this generation as being like children who play the flute and sing a dirge, forcing their playmates to play along by their rules of their games. The Pharisees in Matthew 11 were rebuked for being like these children, moving the goalposts of righteousness to fit their own agendas and desires.

[15:06] They called John the Baptist demonized for fasting, and yet they called Jesus a glutton and drunkard for eating and drinking out of their unbelief and hypocrisy.

Later in Matthew chapter 23, Jesus again condemns the Pharisees and scribes with seven woes for their hypocrisy and unbelief, for imposing laws which they themselves were not following, for neglecting weightier matters of the law like mercy and justice, and instead focusing on external cleanliness when deep inside they were stained with idolatry of the self and lawlessness.

All these things, Jesus pronounces, will incur great judgment upon this generation. Matthew 23, 36. Jesus is directly addressing the Pharisees who confront him, but he's also saying that there are more beyond this group of conspirators who participate in the same wrongdoings of unbelief and unfaithfulness.

The Pharisees and scribes are simply the chief representatives of a whole generation. An evil and adulterous generation that refuses to believe in Jesus as the promised Messiah.

And spoiler alert, Jesus is very worried about this whole generation is fulfilled. Because of this generation's unbelief and wickedness, Jesus was turned over to Pontius Pilate. He was demanded to be crucified by the Jewish leaders and the crowds of people.

[16:35] This whole generation rejected Jesus by scorning his words, spurning his miracles, and crucifying him and putting him to death. And so Jesus condemns this generation and declares no sign will be given to this evil generation except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

What then is the sign of the prophet Jonah? Let's look at Jesus' explanation of the sign. Verse 40. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

The prophet Jonah in the Old Testament was appointed by God to warn the city of Nineveh that judgment was coming upon them from their Lord for their wickedness. But Jonah instead fled from God's presence.

God caused a great storm to torment Jonah's ship and appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah for three days and three nights before God caused a fish to spit Jonah onto dry land.

Jonah then heeded God's command and proclaimed God's judgment to the Ninevites and these Gentile Ninevites believed and feared the Lord and repented of their wickedness and they were saved.

[17:52] The sign of Jonah that Jesus refers to is a symbol of Jesus' own death and resurrection. Like Jonah's deliverance from the fish's belly after three days and three nights, Jesus will be crucified and buried for three days and three nights before doing something no one else, no other Jewish healer or exorcist could have done.

He resurrected from death to life. And this would be that unmistakable sign given to the generation that proves Jesus' authority as the Son of God and the promised Messiah.

We have a very smart congregation here and you may have heard three days and three nights and you may be doing the math and there may be a little bit of confusion now. If we hold the view that Jesus died on what we call Good Friday, a full three days and three nights, 72 hours, would not get us to Resurrection Sunday, more of a Resurrection Monday.

Or going the other way, if Jesus resurrected on what we call Resurrection Sunday, a full three days and three nights prior would bring us to a good Thursday. What we see here is that Jesus is using three days and three nights as an example of a Hebraic idiom, a figure of speech, where a day and a night can refer to just part of a full day and not necessarily a full 24-hour time frame.

In the Resurrection account, what we call Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Resurrection Sunday would count as three days and three nights, even if this time frame does not span that full 72 hours.

[19:35] It's similar to the way we say things like, I was at work all day, without actually meaning that we were in the office for a full 24-hour period. And so Jesus uses this Hebraic idiom, this figure of speech, as a typological representation.

Just as Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights before being spit up, so was Jesus in the realm of the dead for three days and three nights before He resurrected to life. Jesus' resurrection, then, would be that sign to the Pharisees and to the rest of the generation that Jesus is indeed the promised Messiah, the Son of David, and the Savior of the world to both Jews and Gentiles.

And yet, even though Jesus has been proclaiming of God's kingdom to come and how this generation needs to repent and prepare for the kingdom at hand, the generation continues to not

believe.

And it's for this reason Jesus tells the Pharisees, the men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

[20:48] If the Ninevites were able to receive the warnings of the prophet Jonah and reach the conclusion that they had to repent to the Lord, the Pharisees and their contemporaries should be even more cognizant of their sin and even more repentant toward the warnings of Jesus, who is far greater than Jonah.

Jonah's proclamation was toward the salvation of one city, the one city of Nineveh, and yet Jesus' proclamation was toward the salvation of the whole world. But as we've seen over and over in Matthew, the Pharisees in this generation instead continue to be hardened in their hearts and continue in their unbelief, rejecting Jesus as that promised Messiah.

Their lack of faith and unwillingness to receive Jesus is shameful compared to the response of repentance from the Ninevites. Nineveh, a city of Gentiles, repented to a mere mortal man's preaching.

While the Pharisees and Jews, God's own covenant people, scoffed at the preaching of the Son of God, the one who is far greater than the prophet Jonah. Jesus presents his rebuke in another example in verse 42, the queen of the south, the queen of the kingdom of Sheba from 1 Kings chapter 10.

She was Gentile royalty, and yet when she heard of the great God-given wisdom that King Solomon possessed, she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

[22:24] The kingdom of Sheba is believed to have been located in what is today between Yemen and Ethiopia. The queen of the south, the queen of Sheba, would have had to travel up to 1,500 miles to arrive at Jerusalem to test Solomon with hard questions, and after questioning Solomon, the queen left, marveling at his display of godly wisdom, as 1 Kings 10 says.

If the queen of Sheba was willing to go such great lengths, literally great lengths, over 1,000 miles, to consult the God-given wisdom of Solomon, the Pharisees and their contemporaries should all be all the more willing to heed the teachings and admonishments of Jesus, who is greater than Solomon, because he is the very wisdom of God, as proclaimed in 1 Corinthians 1,21,4.

And yet again, the Pharisees in this generation are shameful and worthy to be condemned in their response to Jesus' teachings and his wisdom. Church, Jesus' warnings of this evil generation is not just limited to the Pharisees of Jesus' time.

Here and now, this evil and adulterous generation is still in our midst. We're surrounded by many people who do not believe in the proclamation and wisdom of Jesus and many who are hostile towards the gospel and seek to quench and destroy those who do believe in it, just as the Pharisees plotted for Jesus' destruction.

We look at our time in culture today. With the rise of secularism and post-modern thought, more and more people see the Christian faith as oppressive and offensive to their current cultural sensibilities and they hurl insults and vitriol at those who still adhere to the teachings of God's word.

[24:18] All around the world, persecution of Christians continues to run rampant. I think of Nigeria where in this past year, thousands of Christians have been harassed, kidnapped, or martyred by extremist terrorist groups.

And these persecutions have ramped up all the more in recent weeks. This past month in China, many pastors and leaders of the largest house church in China were arrested for illegally gathering for the sake of the gospel, including dear friends of some of my fellow seminary students.

As Ed had mentioned last week, anti-conversion laws and Gar-Wafi, return home campaigns in India forcibly put Christians in societal disadvantages.

Authorities don't bat an eye when churches and church members are beaten, ransacked, and taken advantage of. But even the smallest of gestures from a Christian will land them in prison.

Jesus promised to the Pharisees that this evil generation that seeks for a sign will not receive anything except the sign of Jonah. We live amongst this generation today.

[25:30] And this generation has received that sign of Jonah in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus has given this generation that sign

proving his authority as the son of God.

But people today, like the Pharisees, still don't believe. If anything, the evil generation is in a worse state than ever before because they've received the good news of the gospel, of Jesus' death and resurrection, and yet they continue in their unbelief and faithlessness.

Church, we're in the midst of this evil generation all around us, but this generation still desperately needs to hear the gospel and have the Holy Spirit soften their hardened hearts to believe.

Jesus then returns to the issue that triggered his rebuke towards the Pharisees, his exorcism of the demon-possessed man earlier in Matthew 12. Jesus now presents a parable of an unclean spirit, a demon that has gone out of a person.

He says in verses 43 to 45 that the unclean spirit wanders around through waterless places, places that are barren and lifeless, but is unable to find a resting place before it concludes, I'll return to my house from which I came.

[26:47] The evil spirit is referring to the person it had once demonized as my house. I'll just go back to my house, the person who I used to torment.

Pastor Charles Spurgeon remarks about this in his commentary. His audacity, Satan's audacity is amazing. Evidently, he considers that he has the freehold of man's nature and can go and come at his pleasure if Satan quits a man of his own will, he is sure to return just when it suits his purpose. Only the divine force which ejects him can secure his non-return. When a house is built, when a house is established, it requires an occupant.

A house needs the Lord. And in the case of the human being, that Lord and occupant is either the Holy Spirit or Satan. There is no neutral ground, no empty house that will remain empty for long. It's only by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in a person that an evil spirit that is cast out cannot enter to demonize the person again. And here lies the problem in Jesus' parable.

[28:08] The demon returns to the person that it had once resided in and it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. The house or the person is made empty because the evil spirit was cast out.

It's been cleaned up while the unclean spirit has been away. Maybe the person has reformed their ways from sin, tidied their life back in order, but the house remains empty.

The house has evicted the evil spirit, but it has not been replaced with the presence of the Holy Spirit. And as a result, the evil spirit is able to return into this house and not only on its own, but with seven other spirits more evil than itself.

It invites its friends also to enter so that they may have an even stronger hold on their victim, so that it's even more difficult to cast out these demons from the person.

Without the Holy Spirit residing in the person to prevent re-entry of evil, they're in a worse state than the first. Through this parable, Jesus is referring to the Pharisees who claimed to be able to cast out demons.

[29:21] However, these Pharisees were merely removing the evil spirits from the person by legalistic ritual, and not by the name of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit.

They were leaving people emptied and cleansed of the evil spirit, but only for a little while. After a bit, because the Holy Spirit is not the present active force dwelling in and working in the person's life, the person will be filled with an even more evil force and be in an even worse state.

The Pharisees' work then is futile, and it's perhaps even more detrimental to this person. But Jesus' parable is also pointing to an even deeper heart issue beneath the matters of exorcism, and that is the Pharisees and this generation's persistent and progressively worsening state of spiritual unbelief.

This is why Jesus applies this parable to them by saying in verse 45, so also will it be with this evil generation. The Pharisees and their contemporaries had witnessed and heard Jesus' proclamation of the gospel.

They heard Jesus pronounce himself as the fulfillment of the law and the prophets, the same law that bound the Pharisees and Jews to sin and death. They saw and witnessed Jesus perform miracles of healing and exorcism with great authority.

[30:52] They witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit through Jesus, and they were invited by Jesus to come to him and to believe in the gospel

that grants them true rest. And yet, this evil generation persisted in unbelief.

Though they presented the gospel by Jesus, the Pharisees refused to accept Jesus as their Messiah and blasphemed the Holy Spirit by their malicious rejection of Jesus as the Son of God. Their rejection of Jesus means that they reject the Holy Spirit from entering into their own hearts, giving way to Satan to enter and dwell inside them.

And it's for this reason this evil generation will be in a worse state than ever before, because they heard the gospel and had a chance to receive Jesus into their hearts, but they actively chose not to. Instead, letting the sinister spirits of unbelief and self-righteousness creep into and take root into their hearts, hearts, and they will become more and more spiritually corrupt.

Brothers and sisters, we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit in our lives. We need the Holy Spirit in our lives to be truly set apart from the evil generation.

[32:14] Satan is sinister in tricking us into thinking we can work out our own salvation apart from the Holy Spirit. And Satan is going to use any measure of unbelief, any measure of self-righteousness, any sense of self-sufficiency to take root into our hearts to influence us away from God's grace.

Look at the Pharisees. They thought that they were righteous by pursuing cleanliness and moralism and following the law scrupulously. However, when the gospel was presented before them in the person of Jesus Christ, they did not receive him out of their external self-righteousness and their hearts were hardened.

Their cleansing rituals, their external piety, and their strivings to follow God's commandments by their own efforts was merely their playing the role of a housekeeper, sweeping and organizing that empty room in their hearts, unwittingly preparing them for the return of the evil spirits.

It's only by confessing our great need for Jesus, our Lord and Savior and receiving the Holy Spirit in our hearts that we can be truly saved from the bondage of sin and sanctified toward God rather than being a part of this evil generation that persists in their sin and their unbelief.

for those of you this morning who feel the burden of sin, who feel the temptation of our fleshly desires, take heart and repent to Jesus confessing that you need not your own power but the power of the Holy Spirit in your hearts.

[33:55] It's only by the power of the Holy Spirit that we can overcome sin. I think of Ed's sermon last week, of that terrifying point of no return that denying and blaspheming the work of the Holy Spirit can culminate to.

Just as the final stage of frostbite brings irreparable damage to the body, the final stage of unbelief is the irreversible spiritual death that will lead to eternal separation from God.

God, this is no trifling matter but for those of you who feel that burden, for those of you who feel those pangs of regret and remorse over your sins and your unbelief, if you feel the burden and hopelessness of not being able to save yourself by your own strength, this means that you're not too late.

You're not at that final point of frostbite. You're not at that final point of unbelief. there's still warmth remaining in your soul and there's still an opportunity for your heart to receive the Holy Spirit and be set apart from this evil generation by declaring your allegiance and need for Jesus Christ.

As the apostle Paul writes in Romans chapter 8, you, however, are not in the flesh but in the spirit. If in fact the spirit of God dwells in you, anyone who does not have the spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

[35:29] But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness. If the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through the spirit, his spirit, who dwells in you.

Praise God that the Holy Spirit is the seal and guarantee of our salvation and that we don't have to work out our salvation on our own strength, but we can receive such grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

So who then is set apart from this evil generation? Jesus gives us the answer in a very surprising way.

We see in verse 46, in the midst of Jesus teaching and rebuking these Pharisees. His mother and his brothers stood outside asking to speak to him. While we don't know exactly in the text what they wanted to talk to him about, we have several accounts in the Gospel of John and the Gospel of Mark that attest to Jesus' biological brothers and family not believing in him and his ministry. We can imagine in this case too, they wanted to speak to Jesus either out of concern from him or wanting to pull him away from any confrontation or conflict with the Pharisees.

[36:53] Jesus, you're causing a scene. Jesus, this is too much. Get out of this place. But Jesus replies to their pleas, who is my mother and who are my brothers?

Now, I don't know about you guys, but if my mother and my brothers wanted to talk to me, and if I were to say to them, who is my mom? Who are my brothers?

I'd be in some pretty big trouble. But Jesus asked this question, and then he stretches out his hand toward his disciples and declares in verse 50, here are my mother and my brothers.

For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother sister and mother. Jesus isn't saying all this to outright reject his biological family.

He's not doing all this to coldly diss his mother and brothers. However, what he is saying is that his biological tie to his family is secondary to his relationship with those who claim allegiance to God.

[38:10] God. Those who follow Jesus and believe in his word and ministry are closer to Jesus than are his actual mother and brothers. Jesus' claim here is reminiscent of his earlier statement in Matthew chapter 10, verse 34 to 38, where he says, whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.

and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

If family relationships or any earthly relationship, father, mother, child, sibling, friend, lover, boss, whoever, if any of these relationships takes priority over loving and treasuring God first, then Jesus says that they are not worthy of him.

There is no compromise of this. There's no secondary or tertiary option. Either we give Jesus our undivided allegiance and priority in our hearts and in our lives, or we are not for him.

And giving him only half-hearted, partial attention. But amidst this hard truth, there's also something so loving and gracious in what Jesus says.

[39:44] Won't you read verse 50 with me again? For whoever, whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

Jesus could have placed all sorts of criteria for those who can be called worthy to be called his family.

He could have said, only the Jews can be called my family because we share the same bloodline.

He could have looked at the Pharisees and said, thank you for your piety and your zeal.

You are who I call family. or he could have placed a whole sequence of requirements. Whoever has kept all of the commandments, whoever has gave at least 10% of their earnings to the temple, has pilgrimed to Jerusalem for all the Jewish feasts and festivals, whoever has recited the Torah from memory is worthy to be called my family.

He could have placed all of these requirements and criteria to have family. But he doesn't do that. Instead, he stretches his hand out to his disciples and calls out, these are my brothers.

[41:01] Whoever does the will of my father is my family. Look at Jesus' disciples. We have fishermen. We have a tax collector.

We have a political radical zealot who made the ragtag group of men that followed Jesus. The 12 stooges, if I may. Some of them were illiterate.

Some were stereotyped as dishonest and greedy. Some were revolutionaries trying to overthrow the Roman government. It's the strangest combination of folks congregated together.

The Pharisees would have seen this group of guys and thought to themselves, what the heck is this? How does Jesus call these guys his brothers? Jesus calls these men these whoever's, his brothers, his family, because they were willing to leave everything they knew and had.

Their occupations, their family, the comforts of their homes, to follow Jesus and to do the will of the Father in heaven.

[42:11] these men were able to be set apart from the evil generation because they believed, because they followed Jesus.

Church, Jesus' declaration of his family is also an invitation. It's an invitation for us today. Whoever does the will of my Father, it's my brother and sister and mother, they are my family. This invitation still remains for us today.

Whoever is willing to sacrifice their worldly lives, their idols, their self-righteousness to follow Jesus will be set aside from the evil generation of unbelief and instead be part of the family of Jesus, the chosen generation.

And that's whoever does the will of the Father in heaven. And Jesus is only able to declare that by accomplishing the prophesied sign of Jonah, his death and resurrection.

[43:30] The gospel of John, chapter 1, testifies the true light which gives light to everyone was coming into the world. God, he was in the world and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

He came to his own and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

brothers and sisters, we too were once part of the evil generation. We too at one point did not believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior and thought that we could save ourselves, our own self-righteousness, our self-sufficiency, our own strivings.

And in our unbelief, we idolized the world and idolized ourselves and in our sin, we with the Pharisees and the Jews and the rest of the world crucified Jesus on that cross.

But Jesus, the Son of God, the fulfillment of the law and prophets after three days and three nights in the place of the dead, rose again from the grave. And in resurrecting, he defeated sin and death to resurrection life.

[44:56] Jesus displayed the Son of Jonah to show his authority as the Son of God, his authority over life and death. And it's through this death and resurrection, Jesus declares that whoever believes in him, whoever follows him, whoever does the will of the Father in heaven will not perish, but have eternal life forever a member of the family of Jesus.

It's through his death and resurrection that we have the opportunity to believe and follow Jesus and forever be adopted into his family to be able to call God our Father and to call Jesus our brother.

It's through his death and resurrection that Jesus is able to stretch his hands out to us and testify, here are my brothers, here are my sisters, here is my family.

family. If any of you here are new to the church, to our church, and this is your first time hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ, please listen to Jesus' invitation.

Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother. Look around you. None of us have the qualifications to be called Jesus' family.

[46:19] I don't know if we have any ethnic Jews here. I don't know, I know for sure that we all have not followed God's commandments to the perfect T. This is a house, a hospital of broken souls and broken people, and yet God in his infinite kindness sent his son Jesus to die for our sins, that we can be grafted into the body of Christ, the family of Jesus.

So for those of you who don't believe yet, we're in the midst of an evil generation, but the invitation is still here. If you feel that conviction in your heart to consider following Jesus as your Lord and Savior, following Jesus as your brother, please don't hesitate.

please don't hesitate to talk to me, any of our pastoral team, any of our church members, about what it means and what it takes to believe in the gospel and to be a part of the family of God.

And for those of us who do believe in the gospel, who are part of the family of Jesus, Jesus is still calling. He's still inviting those who are still in the darkness of this generation to step out in faith. And so as brothers and sisters to Jesus and as bearers of the gospel in this broken world, let us do the will of our Father in heaven and extend that invitation of faith to those around us, that they may believe and become part of the family of Jesus, that we can call them our brothers and our

sisters.

[48:02] Because one day we will see for sure. We will all know for sure whether we are a believer or not, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord and we'll be judged before the Lord of whether we truly believed and lived out the gospel or not.

What great love that we should be called children of God, that we should be called brothers and sisters to Jesus. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace and believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Let's pray. Lord, we confess that we often are so discouraged when we look out to this evil generation, all the darkness around us.

we confess that there are moments where we do doubt, where doubt does creep in and Satan does try to tempt us to draw us away from you.

But Lord, we thank you so much that you give us your Holy Spirit as a sure guarantee and seal of our salvation. We thank you that through the blood of Jesus, through his death on the cross and his resurrection from the grave, we can be called your children, that we can be called brothers and sisters to Jesus, his family.

[50:05] And thank you that you extend that invitation out, not just to righteous people, not just to Jews, but to the whole world. Lord, we pray that your word convicts our hearts, draws us nearer to us and reminds us that though we are in the midst of an evil generation, your way is better.

that you are our great father. We thank you, Lord.

We love you. We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen.