

# **Christ the Lord Episcopal Church Pinole, CA**

Third Sunday after Pentecost: Pride month / June 9, 2024

“Inclusive Jesus”

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Good morning and welcome to Christ the Lord Church on the Third Sunday after Pentecost, and also the first Sunday of Pride month. And although there is not a finite description of pride in our scriptures today, there is a very deep study of inclusiveness, especially by Jesus.

At first understanding, the people in our Gospel today feel that Jesus is not of God, but rather of Satan. Jesus replies with the familiar scripture that a house divided cannot stand. He also states that people who blaspheme or sin will be forgiven. In a way, Jesus is telling us that what we get wrong for simple sake will be forgiven. However, those who aim their attack at God, will not have a chance at forgiveness.

Jesus, as always, is challenging the way people and society think. For everything the religious and pious throw at him, he turns things upside down. After challenging those who question his healing powers Jesus goes on to discuss family, which for us in this century may feel trite. But it was a big deal for those listening to Jesus, and still has implications for us today.

For Jesus to challenge "family" was really shocking to the Hebrew culture, which was based on the kinship system. Many books of the Bible begin their first chapters by introducing the main character's genealogy. In fact, a

pivotal point in both Mark and Matthew's Gospel, the symbolic middle of these Gospels, is where this particular scripture is placed, a scene where Jesus creates a new definition of family. Jesus, disturbed by the present cultural structure of those included and excluded strays from the norm, and by the end of the reading, "family" is extended to those who know him, not just those related by blood.

Let us look at the presentation of this story. Jesus is on the inside of a house teaching his disciples when his mother shows up. Mary is standing outside with "his brothers" and the word is sent to Jesus (who is inside) that his mother and brothers want to see him. And he says, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?"

Then he points to his disciples and says, "Here are my mother and my brothers. Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother". Jesus has, in a moment, turned upside down the whole bloodline family system, even at the risk of slighting his mother! That's utterly shocking and unacceptable to his culture. Jesus says it's not blood that makes family; it's trust, union, and commitment. He has redefined family in a kinship-based culture which is often the shape of ancient religious societies. He will continue to question his very own heritage including the structures that choose who becomes a priest, judge or ruler.

From that point, everything turns to those outside—who are, of course, given a choice and are invited inside where even Mary and Jesus' "brothers" surely are, as we know they stood by Jesus even to the cross.

The scene is presented as a scandalous passage so we can't miss the point: How could he dare to consider his own mother an outsider? Well, he is willing for us to this hyperbole so that we will redefine what family is. Jesus opposes conventional wisdom so much that he has redefined the family in terms of the universal family of love.

Looking back over the last two thousand years or so, how many wars have been justified by kinship, by who is in, or who is out? Jesus, here in today's readings, broke that addiction to false patriotism, loyalty, and nationality, as well as social conformity to laws that leave others as "less than". For Jesus, what is in your heart is what defines you, and for those who follow him, that quality is love.

This month, June, is recognized as Pride month. What better readings could we have than these. For all my years of study, I personally have not found any scripture that would conclude that Jesus would reject anyone. And it is with sadness we recognize that families become broken over issues Jesus would never entertain as important reasons to stray from God's grace or distance one from the kingdom of God. Jesus truly wants his followers to be united, as divided they cannot stand.

Jesus assaults conventional wisdom with its social and religious recognition, the whole honor/shame system. He refuses to abide by it. He refuses to live up to what is considered honorable and refuses to shame what people consider shameful. He does not shame the leper or crippled;

he does not throw the stone at those who have sinned. Rather he puts forth healing, forgiveness and grace and this does not gain him many friends.

It's perhaps the thing that bothers the priests and the elders the most: his inclusiveness. For if everyone is included, they may use their gifts as God intended, rather than be stifled by the law. In response to his ignoring these social debt codes and purity codes, we see the result in the crucifixion.

We are all brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers in Christ. We are not blood-related or born, but instead are in communion and family through the blood of Christ. As a people following his word and example, we have become family. And you know what they say, there is one in every family (you get to fill in the blank). And according to Jesus, even that one is blessed and accepted.

Happy Pride Month! Amen