

DAILY SCRIPTURE READINGS & MEDITATIONS YEAR A

By DON SCHWAGER

Source: <https://www.dailyscripture.net/>

TUESDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2023 – 25th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Scripture: Luke 8:19-21

19 Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him for the crowd. 20 And he was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you." 21 But he said to them, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."

Hear the word of God and do it

Meditation: Who do you love and cherish the most? God did not intend for us to be alone, but to be with others. He gives us many opportunities for developing relationships with family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. Why does Jesus seem to ignore his own relatives when they pressed to see him? His love and respect for his mother and his relatives is unquestionable. Jesus never lost an opportunity to teach his disciples a spiritual lesson and truth about the kingdom of God. On this occasion when many gathered to hear Jesus he pointed to another higher reality of relationships, namely our relationship with God and with those who belong to God.

What is the essence of being a Christian? It is certainly more than doctrine, precepts, and commandments. It is first and foremost a relationship - a relationship of trust, affection, commitment, loyalty, faithfulness, kindness, thoughtfulness, compassion, mercy, helpfulness, encouragement, support, strength, protection, and so many other qualities that bind people together in mutual love and unity.

God seeks a personal intimate relationship with each one of us

God offers us the greatest of relationships - union of heart, mind, and spirit with himself, the very author and source of love (1 John 4:8,16). God's love never fails, never forgets, never compromises, never lies, never lets us down nor disappoints us. His love is consistent, unwavering, unconditional, unrelenting and unstoppable. There is no end to his love. Nothing in this world can make him leave us, ignore

us, or withhold from us his merciful love and care (Romans 8:31-39). He will love us no matter what. It is his nature to love. That is why he created us - to be united with him and to share in his love (1 John 3:1).

God is a trinity of divine persons - one in being with the eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and a community of undivided love. God made us in his image and likeness (Genesis 1:26,27) to be a people who are free to choose what is good, loving, and just and to reject whatever is false and contrary to his love and righteousness (moral goodness). That is why Jesus challenged his followers, and even his own earthly relatives, to recognize that God is the true source of all relationships. God wants all of our relationships to be rooted in his love and goodness.

The heavenly Father's offer of friendship and adoption

Jesus Christ is God's love incarnate - God's love made visible in human flesh (1 John 4:9-10). That is why Jesus describes himself as the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep and the shepherd who seeks out the sheep who have strayed and lost their way. God is like the father who yearns for his prodigal son to return home and then throws a great party for his son when he has a change of heart and comes back (Luke 15:11-32).

Jesus offered up his life on the cross for our sake, so that we could be forgiven and restored to unity and friendship with God. It is through Jesus that we become the adopted children of God - his own sons and daughters. That is why Jesus told his disciples that they would have many new friends and family relationships in his kingdom. Whoever does the will of God is a friend of God and a member of his family - his sons and daughters who have been ransomed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

Through Jesus Christ we become brothers and sisters - members of God's family

Lucian of Antioch (240-312 AD), an early Christian martyr once said that "a Christian's only relatives are the saints"- namely those who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and adopted as sons and daughters of God. Those who have been baptized into Jesus Christ and who live as his disciples enter into a new family, a family of "saints" here on earth and in heaven. Jesus changes the order of relationships and shows that true kinship is not just a matter of flesh and blood.

Our adoption as sons and daughters of God transforms all of our relationships and requires a new order of loyalty to God first and to his kingdom of righteousness

and peace. Do you want to grow in love and friendship? Allow the Holy Spirit to transform your heart, mind, and will to enable you to love freely and generously as God has loved you.

"Heavenly Father, you are the source of all true friendship and love. In all my relationships, may your love be my constant guide for choosing what is good and for rejecting what is contrary to your will."

DAILY QUOTE FROM THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS

Those who listen and obey God's word become true children of God

by Cyril of Alexandria (376-444 AD)

"The present lesson teaches us that obedience and listening to God are the causes of every blessing. Some entered and spoke respectfully about Christ's holy mother and his brothers. He answered in these words, 'My mother and my brothers are they who hear the word of God and do it.' Now do not let any one imagine that Christ scorned the honor due to his mother or contemptuously disregarded the love owed to his brothers. He spoke the law by Moses and clearly said, 'Honor your father and your mother, that it may be well with you' (Deuteronomy 5:16). How, I ask, could he have rejected the love due to brothers, who even commanded us to love not merely our brothers but also those who are enemies to us? He says, 'Love your enemies' (Matthew 5:44).

"What does Christ want to teach? His object is to exalt highly his love toward those who are willing to bow the neck to his commands. I will explain the way he does this. The greatest honors and the most complete affection are what we all owe to our mothers and brothers. If he says that they who hear his word and do it are his mother and brothers, is it not plain to every one that he bestows on those who follow him a love thorough and worthy of their acceptance? He would make them readily embrace the desire of yielding themselves to his words and of submitting their mind to his yoke, by means of a complete obedience." (*excerpt from COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 42*)