

2 Corinthians 4.13-5.1; Mark 3.20-35

Bad driving (from other people, obviously). A disappointing mango. A cat meowing in your face in the middle of the night. Mosquitoes. Ants in the house. Waking up at 4am thinking you've slept through your alarm. Pollen. These are some of the things that drive me crazy!

I wonder what it is for you. And I wonder how often people get onto your list... Maybe sometimes even your family?

Family can be one of the things that most defines you as a person. For a lot of us, our family shapes our values and beliefs, our political and social views, our core identity. These random people we are related to play a huge role in making us, us. But sometimes they can be hard work! Now Jesus is well acquainted with how annoying people can be. At the opening of our gospel reading today the crowd is so desperate, curious, demanding, and relentless, that Jesus can't even grab a bite to eat. No time or quiet space to have his chicken caesar wrap. These people are all over him.

At the same time, word has spread that Jesus himself is being a bit weird. Until a short time ago, he was just a normal guy getting on with life, but suddenly he starts wandering around talking about God, getting himself disciples, telling people to listen to him because he's got all the answers to life, the universe and everything, and even doing miracles on the Sabbath. Who does he think he is? He must have lost his marbles.

So his family feels they need to come and fetch him, and put an end to this whole ridiculous situation. Jesus is probably driving *them* crazy.

But when he's told that they've come for him, Jesus ignores the unspoken instruction - 'alright dude, time to be normal again' - and turns to the question of family itself, and redefines it, broadens it, opens it to a wider inclusion.

What if, Jesus asks, family isn't just the structure we normally think of. What if family is defined by action? By shared understanding and belief, and the behaviours that flow out from that? What if family is marked by a shared craziness? What if, asks Jesus, whoever does the will of God is family? What if being part of this isn't something we earn by trying really hard, but is simply a response to the call of God. Relationships in this family flow from each person's encounter with Jesus. What if? he asks.

Now, a pause. If it helps, shut your eyes: I want you to think of all the things that have given you a sense of worth over the years. Perhaps getting good grades, going to a good school, being great at sports or art. Wearing the right clothes, having the right friends. Maybe you connect well with people, or are talented at a hobby. Perhaps you excel in your job, are charitable or philanthropic. Maybe you find worth through your own family, your children or grandchildren.

These can all be good things. However, they can never be your true worth. Actually, they can never even add to your worth.

This may be an easy statement to nod along to, but how does it actually sit with you deep down? How many times have you felt over the years that you needed to earn that approval? Have you felt that you needed to get the grade, get the job, do well in the test or game or competition, in order to be valued, in order to deserve what we all innately need unconditionally - to be loved? Do you know that you are enough?

One of the things that makes Jesus truly infuriating to an awful lot of people, probably including his family, is that he has absolutely no sense of needing to earn worth from anyone else. He doesn't need approval. He doesn't need to please others. Jesus has this wild, supreme self assurance from knowing that he is unconditionally loved by God. He is able to be himself. Jesus has the audacity to say what he says and do what he does because he knows that he is fully known and fully loved.

So often, for us in our modern world of consumerism and comparison, where we have to earn so much - money, vacation, qualifications, status - we forget that we don't have to earn value as a

human being. Having or not having these things do not make us more or less, because we are already worth everything. We are already known and loved without having to work for it.

Who is my mother and brother and sister? asks Jesus. Who is my family? They are the ones who are prayerfully joining you in learning to weave this truth into hearts and minds. Our family is everyone who presses in on Jesus, bringing their hopeful, thirsty, seeking selves to listen to this source of new and strange wisdom. Our family is a little quirky, but it's beautiful, doing its best to do the will of God in every time and circumstance.

So what drives you crazy? Whatever it is, let this be added to your list: May it drive you crazy to feel for yourself, or to see in others, a need to work for worth. That sense of not being enough, of needing to earn love, may that ache drive you crazy. And may this crazy push you to speak. Speak with words, speak with actions, speak with modelling, speak with working on it yourself. Speak the truth that you are already worthy, always were, always are, and always will be. Live the truth that every other person is worthy too, that we each already possess what we seek. You are loved. You are family. You are God's.

Amen.