



The Home Wrecker
Mark 3:31-35
Rev. Chris Bennett
Washington Street UMC
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When Thomas and I were talking about this sermon series a few months ago, he was listing these options for me, Jesus as party goes, Jesus as vagabond, Jesus as home wrecker. I was thinking, I really don't want to do Jesus as the home wrecker; I'd much rather do Jesus as the party guy. But I said, you pick Thomas, knowing that Thomas loves a good challenge. And he said, Chris, why don't you do the home wrecker, that'd be great. So I said, fine, I'll take on the challenge.

Delving into the passage, Jesus really is a home wrecker, but not in the way we'd imagine.

Typically, when we think of a home wrecker, we think of a person or individual who comes in and splits a home up. But, in my sixteen years of marriage, I've found there's other home wreckers present as well. Are there any football widows here? How about fights over furniture? There's that La-Z-Boy I've had since I was a bachelor. My wife isn't a huge fan of it. Talk about a home wrecker. There's lots of different things that can come into our relationships and our lives, in our homes, and bring division. But often times when we hear the term home wrecker, we're thinking about an individual who has come to divide a home.

Now, I don't think Jesus came to divide homes, but as he comes in his public ministry, that is a by-product of the call to discipleship that he has in our lives and in our world. So we can use the text to help us understand this. But before we look at the passage read for us this morning, we have to look back earlier in Chapter 3 of Mark in verses 20 and 21. It says Jesus entered a house and a crowd gathered, so that Jesus and his disciples were not even able to eat. Then in 21, it says, when his family heard about this, they went to take charge of Jesus. For they said, he is out of his mind.

Back in Jesus' time, one of the core institutional beings in Jewish culture was the family unit. It wasn't just the family unit as we think of the nuclear family, the family unit was all the extended family going back as far as you could go who were still alive. If there was any trouble, if anyone found themselves in need, it was the family's responsibility to care for them. If there was any person who was going astray, it was the family's responsibility to correct them. Everything centered around the family unit.

After a marriage, the new family went to live with the husband's family. They would literally build on to the house. They didn't even know the term boomerang kids, because everyone was expected to come back and live in this space. That's the context in which Jesus is speaking, and living, and being. And it's the context in which Jesus' family sees he's going out and doing some weird stuff. He's going and doing these crazy things, and the family has to go out and take care of him.

Which leads us to our text today. It says that Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. It says, standing outside, they sent someone in – already, it's creating this insider and outsider perspective. It's almost as if they wanted to embarrass him. How many other rabbis have their moms show up when they are out teaching?

And they say, go and tell Jesus that his mom is here. And so the crowd starts whispering, hey, Jesus' mom is here. Psst.... It finally gets to Jesus, and they say, hey Jesus, your mom and your brothers are outside. They'd like to have a word with you.

Jesus, never wanting to miss a teachable moment says, who are my mother and my brothers?

I can imagine if you're the crowd, you're there saying, your mom and brothers are literally outside. We just told you that ...

Jesus says, no, no, who are my mothers and my brothers. He looks around the room at those sitting and standing with him, and says, here are mother and my brothers - who ever does God's will, is my bother and my sister and my mother.

As those sitting around him, I can only imagine their minds exploding. It's a total shift and change from how they saw family. Family was by blood, and you had this responsibility for your family and now Jesus is saying, no no, it's bigger than that. Whoever is united around doing the will of God, that is who my family is. At that time, Jesus was a home-wrecker. He was wrecking this institution just as he challenged every other institution in his public ministry: the institution of the Sabbath, the institution of ritual cleansing of hands before eating, all kinds of institutions he's challenging. And he doesn't stop with family. He's wrecking their mindset of a family and what that looks like.

So there's two things I think we can learn from this. The first is that Jesus is broadening this understanding of family. It's no longer about blood, but about mission, and about an identity in the living God. This is amazing, because each week you all come and gather to faithful worship the living God in this space, to break bread together, to celebrate praise the living God, and hopefully be reminded of your identity as a child of the living God, and your call to do the will of God in the places where you work, and where you play, and where you live. Jesus is redefining what family is.

Yes, you have a family into which you were born, you have a family into which you were married, and you have a family into which you were baptized.

We are family.

This is the family of Jesus Christ, gathered in this space, and we are united by this desire, this innate call to our lives, to do the will of God. For some of us, that may be mind blowing. We aren't here because we have the same thoughts, because we vote for the same people, because we like the same things, but because we're untied under the same God and the same call to serve God with our entire lives.

That can also be divisive. If we go back to the beginning of the passage in the scripture, Jesus' biological family is standing outside, and Jesus is inside with his kingdom family. It's not a matter of believing their wrong, and we're right; it's not a question of they're going to hell and we're going to heaven. It is centered around seeking to do the will of God, and by virtue of that, sometimes it can be divisive.

Pastor and Author Andy Stanley has written a book called *The Principle of the Path*. In the book, he says, "Whatever has your attention, determines your direction, which determines your destination." Anybody who's taught a teenager to drive get this. You tell them to check their blind spot, and they go to check their blind spot, what has their attention is the blind spot, they haven't figured out they can look and still go straight, so they turn the wheel. Their direction is now going to their destination which is the lane next to them.

Whatever has our attention, determines our direction, which determines our destination.

We as a people who are part of the family of Jesus Christ, who is our big brother in the faith, who is leading us, guiding us, and encouraging us to do the will of God, when our attention is on Jesus, our direction is justice, and mercy, and compassion, and understanding, and serving, the least, the last, and the lost, and coming not to be served, but to serve. That's our direction, and that destination sends us to some very uncomfortable places. Having to sacrifice sometimes because it's not about us, it's about what Jesus is doing in and through us. About Jesus transforming all of creation, and we get to be a part of that great work.

It causes tension, and sometimes it wrecks our homes, because not everybody has that same attention on Jesus. Perhaps you felt that tension when having lunch with a friend who may not be a Christ follower. Maybe their attention is focused on gaining power, gaining prestige, gaining material benefits, something other than Jesus. So when you're sitting there talking, you realize you love this person, this person loves you – but you're about different things. Or you're hungering and thirsting for justice and for God's will to be done, but they're hungering for different things – and there's a tensions that exists there.

That is the home wrecking that I want to suggest to you that Jesus brings into our lives. It doesn't mean we stop loving the other; hopefully we can share with them our passion and what has our attention. But sometimes it causes division with our friends, with our families, and with our coworkers, because our attention is on Jesus. When our attention is on Jesus, it sometimes leads us to difficult and uncomfortable places.

Let me tell you the story of Lisa, Trayvon, and Dartanyon. Lisa is a producer for ESPN. She had gone to do a story on these two young men in a small town in Ohio. Trayvon was a young man who had lost his sight at a young age due to a disease, and it had left him blind. Dartanyon was a young man who unfortunately had lost his legs due to a train accident when he was 11. These two young men with these disabilities had found a way to go forward, and found strength together while playing on the school's wrestling team.

They had to do what they did on their own. Unfortunately, Trayvon's parents left him with his uncles and aunts, and he ended up being homeless, at one point living in a crack house. Where

as Dartanyon's mother, after his accident, was so upset she turned to alcohol and drugs and became an addict. She ultimately left his family. So these two young men, in spite of all they've lived through, they go on to be on the wrestling team. One is blind, the other with no legs, they make up the local wrestling team. And they are winning matches and helping each other out, both on the mat and academically in their classes.

They are having this success, and ESPN hears about it, thinking, this story gives you the warm and fuzzies. So they send out some producers to capture the story. The producers spend six months with Trayvon and Dartanyon, and they've got this story, packaged and ready to be aired. At that point, Lisa, the producer could have left. Her job was done. She had put together this made-for-tv story that captured emotion, and was going to be great of the network. But, she didn't leave. She stayed.

Dartanyon asked, why would you stay? You got what you needed. Everyone else in our lives had abandoned us, why wouldn't you leave? She said, 'Love. I'm not leaving because of love, and because my faith calls me to be present even in the midst.' So she stayed with them.

Trayvon later ended up going to the world-wide Paralympics, and won a bronze medal in Judo. Dartanyon ended up not only becoming the first in his family to graduate high school, he went on to be the first to graduate from college. Lisa stayed. She stood in the uncomfortable space of the story. She could have left after her work was done, but she stayed because of her radical commitment to Jesus in doing the will of God. She stayed, and their lives are different because of it.*

That radical desire to do the will of God, to enter into uncomfortable spaces, that's what binds us together as the family of Jesus Christ. When the going gets tough, we don't run. When we hear about hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes, we don't just say, "Wow, I feel really bad for the people, I hope it all works out." We say, "Wow, my faith calls me to be active – how can I be active?" When we see the issues around our community, and see the brokenness and oppression and poverty that's present, we don't say, "Wow, that really stinks. I hope it gets better. Let me pray about that." We pray about it and say, "Lord, how can I enter into this space. Because you've called me to do your will and I want to live into that as my family identity. How can I do that?"

Even the earliest Christians in the midst of plagues in their cities, as everyone was leaving the cities, they would go in the midst of the plagues to serve and to bring healing and comfort and hope. That is who we are because we're following the example of our big brother Jesus. He came and entered a broken creation, willingly walked among us – the Son of God – and gave his life to conquer sin, death, guilt, and shame. He could have run away, he could have said, "I hope it works out for them." But no, he came and walked this earth. So we follow the example of our big brother, Jesus, and we enter into those difficult spaces.

We do that because of the last way Jesus is a home wrecker. Jesus is a home wrecker because he shatters what it means to be a home. Often times we think of a home as a nice comfortable space. My house is my castle ... everything is nice and perfect. But Jesus doesn't call us to be

comfortable, Jesus calls us to be courageous. So our home is with our brothers and sisters. We take security in Jesus, so we can go out and give comfort to those who don't have it.

One last story. This past spring, I did something I shouldn't have done on the internet. I signed up for the Richmond Marathon. "It'll be fun," they said. "You'll meet lots of people," they said." At the end of the day, it's still 26.2 miles, consecutively, on the same day, under your own power. I wanted a challenge, I was entering into a new space where I'd have more time on the weekends, so I did it. I started the training runs – 3 miles, 4 days a week. I'm running, and my knees start screaming at me, "Chris, this hurts! This is uncomfortable! STOP!" In the neighborhood where I'm running there's lots of hills. I'm running and my lungs start telling me, "Chris, this is uncomfortable. STOP!" So my brain says, my lungs say this is uncomfortable, my knees say this is uncomfortable, maybe I should stop because I don't like discomfort. But I thought, I've signed up for this race. If I want to accomplish the goal, I need to get comfortable being uncomfortable.

That changed everything for me in my training. Ever since then, my knees stopped talking. My lungs still work, but they stopped talking. Training has been a lot of fun. And I have met new friends. All because I said, I'm going to be sore, I'm going to be tired, I'm going to want to eat everything I see ... but you know what? It's uncomfortable, and I've become comfortable being uncomfortable.

Friends, brothers and sisters, family of Jesus, our identity is to do the will of God. In doing the will of God, it's not safe, it's not fun, it's not easy. Like Lisa, we have to become comfortable being uncomfortable and entering into spaces we might not want to enter. But we enter because the gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to justice, and to mercy, and to compassion, and understanding.

So this morning, as I stand before you with weary legs that have now been running for six months, I ask you, where is Jesus inviting you to do the will of God? Where is Jesus calling you, wrecking your conception of home, calling you out of comfort into courage into your community into the places where you work, where you play, and where you live? Where are you called to go and do the will of God? May you give up your comfort, and become comfortable being uncomfortable. And may your life doing the will of God continue to make an impact on the places where you play, and work, and live.

Indeed, Jesus has wrecked our home and given us a new one called the kingdom of God, inviting us to be the sons and daughters of the one true King.

* Based on a True Story. See the story online at <http://www.espn.com/video/clip?id=9456327>.