

## Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

Proper 5 – Year B

**RCL Readings**<sup>1</sup> – Genesis 3:8-15; Psalm 130; II Corinthians 4:13-5:1; Mark 3:20-35

**ACNA Readings** – Genesis 3:1-21; Psalm 130; II Corinthians 4:13-18; Mark 3:20-35

**Seasonal Introduction.** The Christian calendar revolves around two principal feasts: Christmas (involving Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany) and Easter (involving Lent, Easter, and Pentecost). Then there is a large section in the middle called ordinary time. This season often focuses on the growth of the Church, ending in a season known as Kingdome tide which concludes with the feast of Christ the king. During this time we read and hear the bulk of the teachings of Jesus in relation to the kingdom of heaven and how we are called to live as disciples of the Messiah.<sup>2</sup>

**Common Theme.** One theme running through the readings this week is the problem of broken relationships. God has always desired a relationship with His creation and with Man. We see the relationship encounter its first set back with the Fall in the Garden of Eden. The Psalm will remind us that sin still mars the relationship. Despite the dysfunctional relationship there is always the promise from God of restoration and hope. The relationship that we have with God is intimate and deeply personal. How so? We have the Spirit of God within us, and you cannot get more intimate than that. Our relationship through the Spirit is so personal that, as we read in today's Gospel, it is possible to offend and blaspheme against him.

**Hebraic Context.** The rebellion against God did not begin on earth but rather it began in heaven. The rebellion gravitated from heaven to earth to involve Man with what has now become known as the Fall. Prior to Adam and Eve, angelic beings that were the first to choose not to submit to God's rule and reign and attempted to overthrow the Lord. The spiritual war in heaven is not well recorded in Scripture, with only a few allusions to divine rebellions such as Ezekiel 28 and Genesis 6.<sup>3</sup>

The term ha'Satan (the Satan) became a popular title for the one who instigated opposition to the rule of God.<sup>4</sup> In Hebrew, the term Satan is usually translated as "enemy" or "adversary" and,

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<sup>1</sup> Alternate RCL Readings: I Samuel 8:4-20, 11:14-15; Psalm 138

<sup>2</sup> Usually from the Synoptic Gospels. This year, year B, the Gospel of Mark is studied. We also study passages with similar themes to the Gospel or go through several books of the Bible (largely from I Samuel-I Kings and the writings from Proverbs, Job, and Ruth in the Alternate reading of year B).

<sup>3</sup> Even the little that is recorded in Scripture is not clear. While many early Church Fathers believed Ezekiel's prophecy was not only about the King of Tyre but also about the fall of an angel of God through pride, early Jewish writings generally focused only on the practical effects of pride.

<sup>4</sup> The first time we see the term שָׂטָן (Satan) spoken of in the Bible, it is as an Angel of the LORD who stands against Balaam in Numbers 22:23. The majority of the time the word is used in the early Prophets of the Hebrew Bible, it is not the title of Satan (the enemy), but rather it is a political adversary. Finally, in I Chronicles 21:1 (which, unlike Samuel and Kings, is not considered a prophetic book) a satan appears who is not named and doesn't appear to be either human nor a messenger of God. This Satan incited

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as a title, is often understood to represent the sinful impulse (יצר הרע) or, more generally, the forces that prevents human beings from submitting to the divine will of God. He is also regarded as a heavenly prosecutor or accuser, a view given expression in the books of Job and Zechariah, where Satan encouraged God to test his servant.

During the 2nd Temple period the adversary was given other names that described his character.<sup>5</sup> Beliel appears in the New Testament Epistles, Dead Sea Scrolls, and Pseudepigrapha carrying the meaning of “the yoke-less one”—referring to Satan having cast off the yoke of heaven, or submission to God, and instigated rebellion. In Jewish literature, such as Enoch and Jubilees, the fallen angel Sama’el (venom of God) is paired with the Enemy and in our gospel portion he will be referred to as Baalzevuv.

**Genesis 3:8-15.**<sup>6</sup> In the Hebraic perspective the beginnings and the ends of themes, narratives and stories in Scripture, are very much linked. However, within that linked narrative, the story of redemption implies that things change—specifically, the history of redemption is from bad to good.<sup>7</sup> But the full story of redemptions began before there was a need for redemption. In the beginning, God created a good world and He created man in His own image.

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David to rebel against the direct command of God. (Not that David wasn't allowed to take a census but, according to Exodus 30:11-16, when he did take a census a tax to the LORD was to be taken with it.)

But the person of Satan was firmly established as a heavenly being in Job (which, along with Psalms and Isaiah, Job is one of the most commonly quoted books in early Jewish literature such as Tanchuma). Both Job and Zechariah make it clear that there is an adversary (Satan) that can come before God and yet struggles against God.

<sup>5</sup> The name Lucifer appeared in the Vulgate as the latin translation in Isaiah 14:12 of the morning star (the light bearer). The Hebrew name, or description, in Isaiah 14:12 is הֵילֵל בֶּן־שָׁחַר (helel ben shachar) literally ‘shining one, son of the dawn’.

<sup>6</sup> ACNA includes Genesis 3:1-21

<sup>7</sup> The historicity of Genesis is commonly replaced with the belief in an allegorical, metaphorical, or even mythical Genesis. While many scholars have taken this position, including several early church fathers, a more important question, perhaps, than whether Adam and Eve were real people is this: If there is no fall, if the pain and death of this world is and always has been natural, why would we need a loving God to send His only Son to redeem us?

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God then created two specific things that He provided Adam, the first was the garden, where our narrative takes place.<sup>8</sup> The second was the creation of a companion.<sup>9</sup> We were created to be in a relationship. God said it was not good for man to be alone, so he created woman. Not only were humans to be in relationship with each other, but God Himself delighted to leave heaven and come to earth to participate in that relationship. Unfortunately, as we shall note, sin mars the relationship with God. Nonetheless, despite knowing that Adam had sinned, God still left heaven and walked in the garden, wanting to speak with him—still desiring that connection.

This sin was brought about by deception through the serpent.<sup>10</sup> The Genesis text does not clearly identify the serpent as Satan, although this is inferred much later in the New Testament by John in Revelation 12:9.<sup>11</sup> In Jewish exegesis the deceiver is the fallen angel *Sama’el* סַמְאֵל who is often paired as the devil and whose name means ‘venom of God’. In some Jewish tradition, the fallen angel does not inhabit the form of the serpent but instead he rides it like a beast.<sup>12</sup> Both the New Testament and the Rabbinic literature understood that it wasn’t simply a talking serpent that deceived mankind but something even more sinister. And mankind was deceived, for they both took and ate of the forbidden fruit.<sup>13</sup> As God continued to seek a relationship with Adam and Eve, they sought to hide from the LORD. Adam’s excuse was that he was naked.

Genesis 2:25 informs us that Adam and Eve were naked and without shame. In Hebrew, there is a subtle difference between the word “naked” as used by Adam in Genesis 3:10 versus that in

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<sup>8</sup> Early Jewish scholars debated whether the garden was a garden within the land of Eden (Genesis 2:8), a garden that was larger than Eden, or even outside Eden (Genesis 2:10) (Genesis Rabbah, 15.2).

What is clear, is that Adam was created outside the garden and then placed in the garden. Even though all the world was good, Jewish tradition places the creation of man in a holy location, the place of God’s choosing—namely the temple mount of Jerusalem (Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer 12:1). Paul seems to expand on this tradition (which included Adam’s burial in the place of his creation) in Romans 5.

<sup>9</sup> Genesis provides only one verse for the creation of Adam, Genesis 2:7, but takes six verses in describing the creation of Eve.

<sup>10</sup> The Hebrew word is שֶׁנָּח nachash and literally does refer to a snake. How exactly the snake could communicate with Eve and why she did not find this encounter somewhat strange is unclear.

<sup>11</sup> Deception is a common feature of Satan. Whatever name he goes by, the great dragon, ancient serpent, devil, or satan, he is a deceiver. He places a veil that hides the truth and hardens and blinds the mind. Isaiah 25:7; II Corinthians 3:14-16, 4:4-5; Revelation 12:9.

<sup>12</sup> Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer 13.1-3, “Sammael was the great prince in heaven... and he found among them none so skilled to do evil as the serpent... Its appearance was something like that of the camel, and he mounted and rode upon it.”; Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, a late Aramaic translation and interpretation of the Torah, in Genesis 3:6 specifically mentions Eve seeing Sammael even though it was the serpent that spoke and also makes an allusion to his name in Genesis 3:14.

<sup>13</sup> The nature of the fruit is unknown, classical Christian art often used the picture of an apple while Jewish tradition depicts a fig, as they immediately felt the need to cloth themselves and did so with fig leaves.

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2:25. The Hebrew letter *yod* was introduced into the word for naked in Genesis 3:10 עֵרֹם and the *vav* was dropped, in Genesis 2:25 the word naked is עָרוֹם. In Jewish exegesis the letter *yod* often signifies a connection to the divine. The first couple had originally been naked and without embarrassment. Now, even though Adam and Eve had created clothing for themselves from fig leaves, they truly felt naked.<sup>14</sup> Their nakedness was deeper and more personal, leading to shame and hiding from God. Sin makes us afraid of God's presence and diminishes the relationship between earth and heaven.

When Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, some of the good they had was removed: they were removed from the garden, the world began to groan, and people have continued in sin ever since. God immediately gave a punishment—but He also gave hope. Genesis 3:15 is often used in reference to not only Jesus' eventual conquest over Satan (Romans 16:20), but also His disciples (Luke 10:17-19). However, there was something even more immediate than a far distant hope. God continued His relationship with mankind.

Genesis 3:21 says that the Lord made replacement garments from skin.<sup>15 16</sup> God didn't completely abandon Adam and Eve. He still came and talked to them. He still clothed the

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<sup>14</sup> Figs are a poor choice of clothing as the sap from figs can produce phytophotodermatitis, meaning the sap of a fig is a skin irritant. Adam and Eve had rebelled against God and, in their new wisdom, chose poor material to hide their newfound nakedness.

The word for betrayal, traitor, and garment (or clothing), while not originally used in Genesis 3, developed from the same three root letters in Hebrew בגד (begeg, bagad). Adam and Eve betrayed the Lord, clothing was used to cover the betrayal, and God in turn chose to be a part of the solution to clothe them with new garments.

<sup>15</sup> Many commentators will say that, for Adam and Eve to be clothed with skin, God had to make a sacrifice—sin resulted in death. This would also set the pattern for sacrifice for sins. However, the Bible neither mentions death nor sacrifice. Leviticus is clear that our sacrifices for sin are for unintentional sins only—and Adam and Eve clearly made an intentional choice to rebel. (The only sacrifice that takes away sin is the one sacrifice that is not killed, the scapegoat sent into the wilderness during Yom Kippur.)

Jewish Sages, on the other hand, note that the only animal specifically mentioned in the garden was the serpent. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, in Genesis 3:14, includes the fact that the serpent will shed its skin as part of the punishment it must endure. Therefore, in Jewish exegesis, the comment goes that the serpent was part of the problem and God used it to become part of the solution. The continuation of the argument would be that God used the shed snake skin, thus He did not have to kill anything.

<sup>16</sup> Glory and light are often related in the Bible (Exodus 34:29; Isaiah 60:1; Matthew 17:1). When God talked with Adam, he was clothed with fig leaves but still declared himself naked while earlier Adam was naked but felt no shame. The Hebrew word used in Genesis 3:21 is עֹר, "skin". When spoken, however, the word sounds almost precisely like אור, "light". Rabbi Meir, a 2nd century sage, noted that man, having been created in the image of God—who is clothed in glory—must also have been clothed with glory and majesty (Psalm 8:6). When Adam and Eve sinned, the אור, or light—the glory of God—was removed and they felt naked. God was forced to replace it with עֹר, or skin, instead.

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naked. He gave rain in its season, feeding the hungry. He still visited those who were sick, in prison, and oppressed. And on the mountain where Adam was created God would lead the captives, all those under the shroud of deception and death, in a great feast of victory—for death would be swallowed up forever. And gloriously, mankind, who was made in the image of God, will one day return to be in the image and likeness of God, “Beloved, we are God’s children now,... but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.” (I John 3:2)

**Psalm 130.**<sup>17</sup> The Psalmist starts from a place of need, even terror.<sup>18</sup> However, the Psalmist, although they were in a place of terror, although they knew the holiness of God and sinfulness of man, wrote a Psalm full of hope and wonder at the goodness of God and His unfailing love. The plea for God to hear his voice wouldn’t matter if God simply heard the noise but didn’t act in mercy. Unfortunately, the petition is from the perspective of a sinner. So what chance does he have of God acting on His behalf?

Sin drives us from the presence of God, we cannot stand before God—like Adam who hid from the presence of God. However, as pilgrims walked to Jerusalem, they understood their own iniquities but they also understood that God would not only hear their voice, but God would act in mercy. God continues to listen even when it is to the voice of a sinner.

There is always forgiveness with God, which the psalmist says produces fear. Not that we become afraid of God, rather we become afraid of sin, noting how it damages the affinity we have with the Lord.<sup>19</sup> God forgives and with the LORD is steadfast love but what the Psalmist most longed for was the LORD. In the context of the theme of fall, restoration and hope, this psalm reminds us that we can have a restored and renewed relationship with God.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Psalm 130 is one of the Psalms of Ascent, traditionally sung by pilgrims on the way to Jerusalem for the annual festivals. It is the only Psalm of Ascent that was also named in the penitential Psalms, seven Psalms listed by Cassiodorus in the sixth century (and mentioned even earlier by Saint Augustine) that is commonly prayed during Lent. No author is given for the Psalm.

<sup>18</sup> Psalm 130:1 uses similar language to Psalm 69:1-3, 14-15. Israel rarely ventured into the sea as it was considered a place of chaos and death. However, the floods of the wilderness would be just as terrifying, particularly for someone like David who had to traverse the valleys of death where flood waters could rush through even on a bright-cloudless day where he watched the sheep. Anyone who could not find a foothold and climb to safety would be killed by the flood waters that would sweep over them.

Several Psalmists also speak of the earth, the grave, and even Sheol as being able to swallow a person alive, such as in Psalm 88 in relation to Numbers 16:31-34 and Psalm 86:13.

<sup>19</sup> Although there is also a fear of God. The only place where there is no fear of God is in a place that God does not exist. And if God does not exist, all things would be permitted and there would be no truth. (Tertullian, in *Prescription against Heretics* 43)

<sup>20</sup> The Psalm is very personal, through the use of singular personal pronouns, and yet likely sung by many together. When we pray this psalm we can cast ourselves into the whole experience of the psalm. Though

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**II Corinthians 4:13-5:1.** Paul continued His exhortation to openly declare the Gospel (and not veil it as the god of this world attempts to deceive the world) by quoting directly from the Psalm 116:10.<sup>21</sup> Persecution and death are not something new. Death constantly surrounds us and we constantly have to plea for God's mercy. But the Septuagint of Psalm 116:10 starts with "Ἀλληλουιά.", hallelujah. Both Psalm 116 and II Corinthians 4:13 are surrounded by persecution, lies, and death. But Paul emulates the Psalmist by declaring the connection between faith and testimony.<sup>22</sup>

The Psalmist was willing to believe "even when I spoke: 'I am greatly afflicted'". How could he do that? Because the LORD heard his pleas. What comes next? "Therefore I will call on Him as long as I live." Paul too had seen God's answer to pleas of mercy and knew that God could deliver the soul even from the snares of death and the pangs of Sheol. Paul had such a bold faith in his belief of the resurrection (for he had personally seen the resurrected LORD) that he was compelled to verbally witness and testify to its truth. The unwavering belief in the risen Jesus helped Paul to "not lose heart" even when the situation around him seemed bleak and uncertain. And he had been in many uncertain and dangerous environments. That same confidence is what Paul would hope the Corinthians would embrace.

Death was present for the Psalmist and, before him, since the time of Adam. Death was still present after Jesus' resurrection as it is to this day, but eternal life has already started for those who believe. Today's difficulties are nothing compared to the future rewards of glory. This was true of Paul the Apostle, the fledgling Corinthian church and remains true today for the people of God. The passage concludes with Paul describing our earthly bodies as temporary tents. We are, after all, mortal beings. Faith and belief understand that we are indeed mortals and that eventually we will replace this earthly body for a new one. Or using the metaphor of Paul; "we

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we might be in a dark place and at a spiritual low, we have the hope of forgiveness and the bright future of life from the dead.

<sup>21</sup> Paul seems to have quoted the Septuagint of Psalm 116:10 as it is word for word. At this point in early church history the "according to what is written" refers to the Hebrew Scriptures as the New Testament gospels were not in common circulation in any form. Paul never once quotes from the gospels implying he did not have ready access to one, or, perhaps, hadn't even seen one.

While Paul only quoted a small portion of Psalm 116:10, it was common practice to assume that the listeners would understand the general context and perhaps even common teachings around the quoted passage.

<sup>22</sup> Faith is more than simply knowing something to be true—that would be a form of Gnosticism. Knowing about God is not the same as having a relationship with Him. We believe and so we speak. We give our testimony of truth, boldly showing the light of the Gospel. We also render to God what He deserves, at least to the best of our ability.

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have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”<sup>23</sup> Mortality should not be an existential problem for us.

**Mark 3:20-35.** When Jesus began His public ministry, He did not seek to become popular.<sup>24</sup> But His ministry was still incredibly popular. It became so popular that Jesus and His disciples did not even have time to take a break and refresh themselves. The crowd around Jesus was so overbearing that they “could not so much as eat bread”. Those with Jesus tried to intervene.<sup>25</sup> The reason for the intervention is very unclear, but most translations state something like, “He is out of His mind.”<sup>26</sup>

Concurrently, Jesus was also challenged by the temple leadership from Jerusalem. They completely misunderstood the ministry of Jesus and launched into a personal attack calling into question his source of power. Mark notes that it is the scribes who had come down from Jerusalem.<sup>27</sup> The scribal function was highly regarded in the community at the time of Jesus. The writing of new scrolls was (and still is) done by a *sofer* who is a talented and extremely

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<sup>23</sup> In Genesis 2 Adam and Eve were naked but not ashamed. By the end of Genesis 3, though clothed with physical clothing, they were ashamed in their nakedness. Paul continued in II Corinthians 5:2-4 by stating that the new clothing of heaven that we long for will restore us from our present state of nakedness.

<sup>24</sup> Mark actually states that multiple times Jesus commanded unclean spirits to be silent regarding who He was (Mark 1:25; 3:12). Jesus also instructed some of those He healed to be silent (Mark 5:43; 7:36). He even told Peter and the disciples to remain silent, “And He strictly charged them to tell no one about Him” (Mark 8:30). Although Jesus did allow, and even commanded, the message to be spread to the gentile cities of the Decapolis (Mark 5:20).

<sup>25</sup> It is unclear who it was that tried to intervene, from context it was likely His disciples or perhaps His family.

<sup>26</sup> The Vulgate translated Ἐξέστη with *furorem*, “rage” or “out of [his] mind.” This translation found its way into our modern English translations. However, the word was not commonly used in contemporary Greek literature. Rather, it is actually used commonly in the Septuagint. It seems likely that, as they were in the Galilee and were close to Jesus, they would have been speaking Hebrew and used a word such as חרד, which is often translated into Ἐξέστη. In the Hebrew Scriptures, this word was used to describe an involuntary bodily response to stimulus.

There is nothing to indicate from this passage that Jesus was unhappy with his mother and brothers. Jesus may have been trembling due to lack of food, the antecedent to the statement that those close to Him tried to seize Him from out of the crowd. It could also be hypothesized that Jesus was trembling because He was possessed (out of His mind) or that Jesus was driven (Ἐξέστη) by something.

<sup>27</sup> Galilee is several days north of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is more than twice the height of Nazareth above sea level while Capernaum is actually below sea level. However, the Scriptures almost always use the term “to go up to Jerusalem” or “to go down from Jerusalem”, not only in a geographical and physical reality but also in a spiritual reality. In going to Jerusalem, pilgrims would often be travelling to fulfill the commandments of God and, while it wasn't a bad thing (in fact, pilgrims should have returned to their land to work), in returning from Jerusalem they would be going back to earthly, mundane life.

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conscientious copyist.<sup>28</sup> Because they worked with text so diligently the community would often seek them out to ask questions of the Scriptures. Here they travelled from Jerusalem to hear, and to challenge, Jesus.

The accusation was that Jesus was performing His miracles under the influence and power from the demonic realm through a demon lord called Baalzevuv. Baalzevuv, which means 'lord of the fly', was a late Second Temple period name for Satan. Flies are notoriously associated with death, carrion, and decay. God is life and in him is no death. Satan, as the antithesis of God and life, became known as the lord of death or the lord of the fly. The Jerusalem establishment accused Jesus of taking His power not from heaven but rather from the agent of death and decay. In rebuking this accusation Jesus pointed out the obvious dichotomy of being an agent of Satan whilst fighting against Satan—this would result in Satan's kingdom descending into civil war. There was an obvious disconnect in the scribes' reasoning.<sup>29</sup>

He also warned the Jewish leaders about the unforgivable sin, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit! This blasphemy is extremely serious, for Jesus says that the person who does this “never has forgiveness, being guilty of an eternal sin.” Most of us have probably wondered at some point, “What exactly is this blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, and have I mistakenly done it?” To answer that question, we should consider the ministry and function of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus says the Spirit will convict the world of sin, lead us into all truth and testify about Jesus. Paul, in Ephesians 4, says that the Spirit will bring all into unity and that involves a restored relationship with God. Perhaps we should look at blaspheming the Spirit in the context of relationship. Salvation includes the restoration of a loving eternal relationship with the Father. Perhaps it is not that the sin of blasphemy is “too big” for God's forgiveness but rather that in a broken relationship there is no desire in the sinner to ask for or to receive forgiveness at all. That is a sad state for anyone to be in, to have an attitude that does not care for God's forgiveness nor care to know God at all. Unfortunately, we probably all know people, friends, and family, who possess this attitude. So let us persistently pray that their relationship would be restored—for this is a grave and urgent matter.

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<sup>28</sup> They took their craft so seriously as to undergo a mikveh (water immersion) for ritual purity before even daring to sit and write the words of holy Scripture. Every aspect of writing a new sacred scroll was seen as an act of holiness.

<sup>29</sup> In Luke 11:14-23, Jesus made an even stronger argument. Jesus was not the only one to cast out demons. The way that the righteous cast out demons was through fasting, prayer, and the name of God—for it was God who had the strength to do the actual work. Jesus' admonishment was that if Jesus were not casting out demons by the power of Baalzevuv (which He obviously wasn't) than the actual way demons can be cast out is by the finger of God (a reminder of God's power going back to the plagues of Exodus and the striking of the Egyptians at the Sea of Reeds). And if God was with Jesus, it was time to pay attention to the work of God.



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**Hebraic Perspective.** In our gospel passage Mark 3:31-35 some of Jesus' family, including His mother Mary, were outside the house. Perhaps these were the relatives mentioned in Mark 3:21 who were there to intervene. Jesus asked a question, "Who is my mother and who are my brothers?" This is not a question to imply that Jesus was dissolving His family relationships, for that would break the commandment to 'Honour your father and mother'. In Jewish tradition, questions are used to teach. The answer to the question is whoever does the will of God is invited to be part of the family. The family is not being dissolved or annulled, rather the opposite—it is being expanded. If doing the will of God is counted as being part of the family then the next question is: "What is the will of the Lord?"

Many people spend a great deal of time and effort trying to discern the 'Will of the Lord' for their lives. Sometimes Christians get so stuck in the search for the will of God that they never end up satisfied with reaching a conclusion. I suggest many of us confuse the 'Calling of God' on our lives with the 'Will of the Lord'. We all have a calling and the good thing about God is the "gifts and calling of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29). Irrevocable means the calling doesn't go away and it's not rescinded. So if you don't know what your calling is today, don't panic, it will be the same calling tomorrow. God doesn't change His mind. In relation to the calling of Israel to be a light to the nations, that calling remains in effect.

How then do we discern God's will? In the Hebrew, the word 'will' is רצון *ratzon* and it occurs regularly in the Scriptures, often being translated as favour, acceptable, goodwill and delight. However the phrase 'Will of the Lord' רצון ליהוה *ratzon l'Adonai* only occurs twice, Isaiah 58:5 and Isaiah 61:2.<sup>30</sup> רצון *ratzon* comes from the verb 'to want' indicating that the 'Will of the Lord' is the closest thing to God's heart, it is the thing He wants the most, that being His will! In the context of Isaiah 58:5-6 and Isaiah 61:1-2 we find God's heart is to open the eyes of the blind, to make the deaf hear, to act with justice, and stop oppression, to break yokes that bind people down, to preach the good news to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to bring comfort to those mourning. Our individual callings are all different, but the will of the Lord is the same for everyone.<sup>31</sup> Doing God's will is part of the invitation into the family of God.

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<sup>30</sup> A similar term, רצון מיהוה (*ratzon m'Adonai*) is found three times in Proverbs (8:35, 12:2, 18:22). The will of God for people is life, and an abundant life. And so we discover in Isaiah where God's will is made clear.

<sup>31</sup> Although God doesn't always receive what what is His desire (רצון) as shown in Proverbs 12:2 where the person who follows their own purposes is condemned.