

Luke 8:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee.

Analysis

And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. Messengers relay the information: **Thy mother and thy brethren** (hē mētēr sou kai hoi adelphoi sou, ἡ μήτηρ σου καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοί σου) **stand without** (hestēkasin exō, ἐστήκασιν ἔξω)—positioned outside, excluded from Jesus's immediate presence. They are **desiring to see thee** (theontes se idein, θέλοντές σε ἰδεῖν), wanting audience with Him. The verb theontes (desiring, wishing) indicates their intention, and idein (to see) suggests both physical presence and conversation.

The spatial language is significant: family stands 'outside' (exō) while disciples surround Jesus inside. This physical positioning anticipates Jesus's spiritual point—proximity to Jesus is determined not by biological relationship but by spiritual response. The message creates expectation: surely Jesus will interrupt His teaching to attend to His mother and brothers. Ancient Near Eastern culture demanded honor to parents, especially mothers (Exodus 20:12). Everyone would assume Jesus would immediately respond to Mary's presence. His answer overturns these expectations, establishing a revolutionary principle about the primacy of spiritual kinship.

Historical Context

Mary's presence is noteworthy—she had witnessed Jesus's miraculous birth, heard angelic announcements, treasured prophetic words (Luke 1:26-38, 2:19, 51), and

seen His first miracle at Cana (John 2:1-11). Yet even Mary stood outside, seeking access. This demonstrates that physical relationship to Jesus, even the intimate mother-son bond, doesn't automatically grant spiritual access or understanding. His brothers' unbelief (John 7:5) and possible concern about His sanity (Mark 3:21) may have motivated this visit. In Jewish culture, family honor and cohesion were central values. For a rabbi to prioritize disciples over biological family was countercultural and potentially scandalous. Yet Jesus consistently taught that following Him might require subordinating family ties (Luke 14:26). This incident prepares for the church's self-understanding as God's family, where believers call each other 'brother' and 'sister' based on shared faith rather than shared ancestry.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What does Mary standing 'outside' suggest about the relationship between biological connection to Jesus and spiritual access to Him?
2. How does the messengers' expectation that Jesus would immediately respond to His family reflect cultural values about family honor?
3. Why might Jesus's brothers have sought Him at this moment, and what does their position 'outside' symbolize spiritually?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ἀπηγγέλη	αὐτῷ	λέγοντων,	Ἡ	μήτηρ	σου	καὶ
And	it was told	him	by certain which said	G3588	mother	Thy	And
G2532	G518	G846	G3004		G3384	G4675	G2532
οἱ	ἀδελφοί	σου	ἐστήκασιν	ἔξω	ἰδεῖν	σε	θέλοντές
G3588	brethren	Thy	stand	without	to see	thee	desiring
	G80	G4675	G2476	G1854	G1492	G4571	G2309

