



One Page Sermon

By Pastor Robb McCoy

February 11, 2024

In praise of the Superbowl

Recap of sermon from February 11, 2024

Scripture: Matthew 12:33-37, 46-50

I usually take time on Superbowl Sunday to take prophetic aim at the High Holy Day of American consumption, greed, celebrity worship, and redemptive violence. It always feels a little hollow because on most Sundays I am quick to get home to eat my wings, groove the halftime show, and cheer on the gladiators.

This year I'm going to do something different—I'm going to sing the praise of the Superbowl. It is all the things I say, and Christians should be prophetic critics of culture when needed. But there is something else that is compelling about the Superbowl. It is a great American holiday with no familial obligations.

Think about it. No one has ever said, "I'm going to my wife's family for the first half of the game, and then head over to my dad's house after the halftime show. We did it the other way around last year." No one has ever dreaded eating with *that* uncle on the Superbowl. Thanksgiving and Christmas are great, but they are the source of great anxiety for a lot of people with strained family relations.

The Superbowl is a day when people get together with people by choice—not obligation. Or they stay home and watch by choice—not obligation. Or they just opt out of the whole thing—with no one making them feel guilty.

We have a way of glorifying and idolizing family that can be problematic, forcing people into anxious situations and toxic relationships they might otherwise avoid. Family can be wonderful, but it can also be the source of disfunction, hostility, and even abuse.

It's funny, in this series on Mary, I have had no problem finding art to share. The holy family at the presentation in the Temple, Mary losing the boy Jesus, Mary at the wedding of Cana... all of these scenes are represent-

ed often in art. This scene, Mary being ignored by Jesus, isn't in a lot of art. We don't like to think about Mary and Jesus having a strained relationship.

In Mark 3:21 Jesus' mother and family wanted to bring him home because "he was out of his mind." This shows that there is some tension between Jesus and his family. Were they trying to protect him? Were they fearful of what his ministry would cause? Did they really think he was just out of his mind?

Matthew presents the tension differently but still, Jesus seems to be ignoring his mother. In Matthew the situation is presented as one more challenge in a series of questions full of tension and animosity. In this part of the story Jesus has been highly critical of the powerful in society and was facing serious opposition. This inquiry about his family was another attempt to embarrass Jesus for not following the social norms.

Whether or not Jesus had a strained relationship with his family as an adult, the point of the story is his response. "My family is those who follow me" (paraphrased). "My family is those who love like me, forgive like me, heal like me, feed like me."

If your family situation is strained or healthy, this is a good reminder. Family is more than blood. Spend time with people who make you better. Jesus is doing what Jesus always does—expands our ideas of who belongs. He is not tearing down the family. He is expanding it.

Be with people that help you follow Christ more fully. If this is family, great, but even Jesus seemed to struggle with family. Be with people who give you life, not tear it down. Be with people who help you love more fully and forgive more completely. This is what church should be—a group of people who help each other follow Christ. We choose our family and celebrate because every Sunday is super.

Next Week: The First Sunday of Lent

Mark 12:38-44