We’re starting a new sermon series today on the Family. The TV show Family Matters aired for the first time on September 22, 1989. Here’s another family in 1989. **(Show Taylor family snapshots)** This show became a staple for those of us growing up in the 90’s and it was a show the whole family could sit down and watch. If you young folk have never seen it it’s on Hulu. For those of us who watched it as children or teenagers we first related best to Eddie, Laura, and Judy (remember her – they wrote her off!), they were the children/teenagers, but now some 30 years later we identify better with Carl and Harriette, the mom and dad. Time changes things for sure! Our parents who watched with us are now identifying as Mother Winslow, Carl’s mother, instead of with the parents. Our roles have changed. Our pictures or snapshots of the future have changed too. My picture in 1989 for what my life would look like in 2018 would definitely not be my current reality. Our pictures of what our family life would be all these years later may not have worked out exactly. It could be that the only part of the picture perfect TV family life we envisioned that has worked out is that we have an annoying neighbor. Mine are currently using their backyard as a trash can. Neighbors are weird. Life has a way of messing with the perfect picture we created, and here we are – all grown up, a bit more knowledgeable about family life, a little less naïve, and possibly a lot more jaded. Maybe the matters of family life have been more difficult to navigate than you had hoped, or the twists and turns have been a bit more jarring than you had planned. So over the next 4 weeks we’re going to take a look at answering the question does the Family still Matter in 2018? It might look different than you had planned all those years ago, but we hope to show that it still matters!

Family matters because at every level of family life God is painting a picture of something else.

**Picture #1: Marriage**

Marriage matters because it’s the picture of Jesus, the bridegroom, and His bride, the church. It matters because it reflects the love He has for us, His bride. The Apostle Paul gives us the picture when he writes, **“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her… In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies … After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.” Ephesians 5:25-32** The Bible begins with a marriage, as Paul quotes from Genesis 2 when he says a man will leave his father and mother to be united to his wife. This happens in the Garden! God himself sets up a precedent for how marriage will work because Adam and Eve don’t have parents to leave. That instruction is meant for us, not Adam! Marriage matters from the Garden in Genesis until the closing chapters of Revelation when Jesus returns for His bride and the picture is complete. John writes, **“Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” … I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them … ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes.” Revelation 21:1-4** See, there’s always been crying at weddings! From the beginning of Scripture to the very end marriage is an important picture, an important image. Marriage matters because it is a picture to the world of how God loves His people, and because it shows that the end – the return of Christ – has not yet come.

**Picture #2: Children**

Family can be defined as “a group of people who are related to each other, children or even as a societal unit consisting of parents and children.” Generations of family – grandparents, parents, children are important to the picture. It’s primarily in this way that God intends for the faith to be handed down. **“One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.” Psalm 145:4** Family matters because early on God instituted this picture of the parents teaching their children. God instructs Moses to tell the people, **“These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you … so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life …Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” Deuteronomy 6:1-7** Parents teaching their children about the Lord within a family setting is what God planned all along. Paul shows us an example of this in the book of 2 Timothy, **“I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you** **also.” 2 Timothy 1:5** Generations handing down, teaching, educating, entrusting the faith to the next generation. This instilling of the faith in the next generation happens best within the family. So, yes, family matters.

**Picture #3: Adoption**

God paints such a beautiful picture of what it looks like to be chosen and placed into family through adoption when He uses it to explain what happens to us upon accepting Jesus into our hearts. **“For he CHOSE us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In LOVEhePREDESTINED us for ADOPTION to SONSHIP through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.” Ephesians 1:4-6** God chose us and adopted us into the family of God.

Nearly 10,000 kids in the state of Oklahoma are currently in state custody, half of which are placed with family or close friends, but on any given day around 350 children are in need of a home. The church has an opportunity to be a picture to the world of God’s incredible, lavish love for us by fostering and adopting children who need a family. The family matters because it’s a place where the picture is made complete as we choose those to love and make sons or daughters.

**Picture #4: Singleness**

The pictures of marriage and children will be more fully put under the magnifying lens over the next few weeks as I’ve only given a quick snapshot. However, marriage and children aren’t the only pictures of family. Just as marriage paints a picture of God’s love for the church here on earth, singleness paints a picture of the future. Remember I said that marriage shows us that the end has not yet come. Jesus hasn’t returned for his bride so the need for an earthly picture – a reminder – of what’s to come is still needed. But, one day the picture will change. **“Jesus [said], “The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy of taking part in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage,and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God’s children, since they are children of the resurrection.” Luke 20:34-36** I will quickly point out that a literal reading of this text indicates that Jesus thinks single people are a picture of perfection and are in fact angels and are more special than everyone else. Quick note to single adults – American society and American church culture says that you aren’t valued unless you’re paired with someone else – relationship and marriage is the ultimate experience – but Jesus says otherwise. You aren’t less than just because the box you check on your tax form under marital status says “single.” Barry Danylak in his book, Redeeming Singleness, writes, “The fact that there is no marriage in heaven speaks not to the paucity {inadequacy} of our future existence but to the greatness of our God. For no earthly or human relationship we can or ever will experience will stand even as a momentary flicker of a candle in comparison to experiencing … the presence of our almighty God.” It’s a picture of the future family of God where the relationship that matters most is the one between you as an individual and the one, true, holy God, and the single life is a picture of the sufficiency of Christ in meeting all of our earthly needs.

**Picture #5: Friendship**

God is painting a picture of what it looks like to do life together. Genesis 2, says that after God made man He saw that Adam was lonely. Contrary to popular belief the dog is not man’s best friend – or else problem solved. **God declares, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” Genesis 2:18** We read this and because God’s answer to Adam’s loneliness was a wife, Eve, our minds fill in the blank that loneliness is solved through a marriage relationship. However, one definition of family is “a group of people united by certain convictions or a common [affiliation](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/affiliate#h1).” Family matters and for some friends become their family.

Let’s consider the life of Jesus. Jesus never married or had any children and yet His life is marked by the close, intimate relationships that came through friendship. When you think of Jesus you do not think lonely or isolated – you instantly think of the people who surrounded him, the people who had meaningful encounters with him, and the people He so clearly loved. John is often times referred to as the disciple whom Jesus loved. We see Jesus calling out to his disciples in John 21, “Friends,” he says, “haven’t you any fish?” He built relationships with these men. We see the group of women who followed Him and mourn His passing – friendships with women and men. John 11 tells us how incredibly close he was to Lazarus, Mary, and Martha – mentioning several times how much he loved them. This family came to be some of his dearest friends. He stayed with them often and found a place of refuge in the home of these friends. It’s not good for man to be alone, not even for the Son of Man. Jesus life gives us the example that “not being alone” doesn’t always look like marriage. Life *is* meant to be shared with others – Jesus came not to be served but to serve others, He willingly lay down His life for others, He cared for others – because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a Shepherd and as the Good Shepherd this grieved His heart. Jesus made friends and surrounded Himself with others leaving us an example of what it is to turn friends into family.

Friendship is powerful. C.S. Lewis’ famous quote about friendship states that “**Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another: ‘What! You too? I thought I was the only one.” C.S. Lewis** Through friendships God paints a picture of what it looks like to not only do life in partnership with others, but also to give a picture of what is meant when Jesus says, **“You are my friends if you do what I command.” John 15:14** What does it mean to be a friend of Jesus? Well, it probably looks a lot like being a good friend to others.

The Bible gives beautiful examples of this type of friendship. It’s found in the Old Testament story of a lady named Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi. Both are bound together by their shared grief of widowhood. They care deeply for each other and are committed to supporting, helping, and encouraging one another. It wasn’t good for either of them to be alone so God placed them together as a helpmate for the other. It’s Ruth who says to Naomi, **“Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.” Ruth 1:16** That’s powerful friendship that stays put and sees to another’s deepest needs.

We see this in the story of King David before he’s made king and his best friend, Jonathan. **“Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself … And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.” 1 Samuel 18:1-4**

They shared everything – what I have I’ll give you if it will help. The covenant they made to each other included showing kindness to the other’s family for generations to come. That’s powerful friendship that says I’m here for you in the good, the bad, and the ugly. If you need anything and I can give it then I will.

Both of these Biblical examples were of same gender friends – 2 females and 2 males who were deeply committed to each other through friendship. That type of friendship is lost to us because American culture has hijacked friendship. No longer do we know how to truly be friends with people of our same gender or the opposite gender without bringing sex into the relationship. It’s why we talk about “friends with benefits” or our sexual identity must be defined by the way in which we interact with others. I enjoy being with this person, I’m attracted to them and their personality and have so much in common, therefore I must be gay or bisexual or gender fluid because if I like someone – same sex or opposite sex – I must have sexual feelings for them. We’ve lost the ability to be friends. To share life and common interests and prefer one another and bear one another’s burdens – that’s friendship, but we’ve confused it with something else. Todd Wilson in his book Mere Sexuality says part of the problem is that “we as a culture have elevated the romantic relationship as the most fulfilling relationship possible – the supreme relationship that trumps all others. Friendship tends to pale in comparison.” He goes on to say that, **“We’re convinced as a culture that marriage is an all-sufficient relationship, one that can and will meet all our relational needs. Consider this fascinating statistic. Did you know that most people stop forming deep friendships after the age of twenty-eight? And do you know what else tends to happen, on average, around the age of twenty-eight? People get married. Just a coincidence? I don’t think so.” Todd Wilson**

Marriage is not the only way to not be alone, in fact, I would guess that many married people still feel lonely. It’s not good to be alone, but whether you’re single or married there are friendship relationships that can be life giving and life sustaining to you. Jesus had those types of friendships. They are scriptural. The church needs to be a place where friendships are formed. Deep, meaningful, life-sharing, powerful friendships are important, and they can be found here. Some of my dearest friendships have been formed in this church and I’m forever grateful for life long friends from childhood and more recently a group of ladies that speak life to me and are committed to praying one for another. It’s a family matter and friendship’s matter. Not everyone will be a spouse or a parent, but everyone can be a friend and in doing so completes the picture of what it looks like to be a friend of Jesus.

**Picture #6: Church**

It’s not good for us to be alone, and so the Psalmist says that, **“God sets the lonely in families.” Psalm 68:6** One way that God forms families is through the church. No man or woman is an island – we need people – we need people to become family –and the church becomes the place where married people, young people, old people, single people, all the people come and find a place to belong and form a new family. Quoting again from Barry Danylak, **“As Christians we have the added assurance that whatever our physical family situation may be – good, bad, or non-existent – we are never alone but are always part of another family, a family whose head has promised never to leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5).” Barry Danylak**

The body of Christ, the church, becomes a picture for how families are supposed to look and function and work together. Paul writes in the book of 1 Corinthians 12 about the body of Christ**. “Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.” 1 Corinthians 12:12** He goes on to explain that in a body the foot can’t say – hey that’s not fair I wanted to be the hand – I quit! And the ear can’t say forget it – if I’m not the eye then I’m out. **“In fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.” 1 Corinthians 12:18** And the eye can’t say to the hand - I don’t need you – or imagine the head saying that to the feet! Rather the plan is that they all work together and **“If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.” 1 Corinthians 12:25** The family of God lives out this picture. We aren’t to look at each other and say – I don’t need you – I’ve got this nor are we to look at ourselves and say, well, I’m just a hand and I’ll never be as good as the foot there’s no place for me in that church. We’re in this together. The church needs all of us. Carbondale needs all of us to make this place run and work and be effective for Jesus. It’s in the family of God that we learn what it is to suffer when another member is suffering and rejoice when another member is rejoicing. We learn here how to get along with others, how to celebrate one another, how to love one another. Family matters and the church is the picture of God’s family coming together, serving together, loving together.

**Picture #7: Sons and Daughters**

Family matters because it’s the language we use to describe our relationship with God the Father, and His Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. It’s because God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world, not to condemn us, but to save us. And, **“To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.” John 1:12** So let me just make sure you understand the picture – maybe you’re single or married, maybe you’re a teenager or senior adult, maybe you have a great family or maybe you come from a broken family. Maybe you arrived here today with it all together or maybe it’s all falling apart but to all of us Jesus gives an invitation to come through Him to the Father and form the most important relationship of all time – Our relationship with Jesus is first and foremost and He is the only way to the Father, the only way to eternal life. And we can come into relationship with Him today. It’s not good for a man or woman to be alone, and Jesus promises to never leave us or forsake us. We can be in right relationship with the Godhead today and become the son or the daughter of God.

He longs to be in relationship with us – to bring us into His family – to call us Son, Daughter. If you want to be part of God’s family you’ll have an opportunity to do that at the close of this service.

Snapshots are funny things. When we look at pictures of ourselves or when we take a selfie on our phone we instantly see the things that we want filtered! We see the things that need to be changed, edited, or cropped out. But, if God took a photo of your family life right now what would He see? What would you see? What might need to be changed or edited or cropped with the help of the Holy Spirit?

Take an unfiltered snapshot of your family in your mind and ask yourself these questions:

**1. Where am I in relation to Jesus?** Am I close to Him or far away?

**2. How am I doing in relating to others within my church family?**

**3. How am I doing as a friend? Are my friendships and the way in which I treat my friends a reflection of Jesus?**

**4. If I’m single, does my life reflect my total reliance upon Jesus?**

**5. Is there a place in my family to foster/adopt/mentor/help someone who needs a family?**

**6. Does the picture of my home reflect a place where Jesus and the truths of scripture are being taught, modeled, and lived out?**

**7. Does my marriage and the way I treat my spouse reflect the picture of how much and how beautifully Christ loves the church?**

If any of these pictures leave you with less than a smile in your heart then can I encourage you to ask the Lord how you can edit the picture? He’ll help you to do it because *your* family matters to Him.

Let’s pray.