

Jesus' siblings (Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:5-12; Genesis 2:18-24; Psalm 8; Mark 10:2-16)

Our behavior doesn't change the claim Jesus makes on us.

by [Rachael Keefe](#)

October 5, 2018

To receive these posts by email each Monday, [sign up](#).

For more commentary on this week's readings, see the [Reflections on the Lectionary](#) page. For full-text access to all articles, [subscribe](#) to the Century.

Jesus is not ashamed to call us siblings. Though I am grateful beyond what words can express, I sometimes find this hard to believe. Hebrews tells us that we are sanctified by the same God and claimed as siblings by Jesus. Human behavior, including my own, often makes me wonder how Jesus can possibly claim us all as siblings.

I don't need to list all the ways in which we don't behave much like we are related to God, or how often we fail to live out what Jesus taught. Yet that hasn't and won't change the claim Jesus makes on us. We are siblings of the risen Christ; we are siblings of one another. The beauty of this is that our behavior doesn't change this. I suspect that the writer of Hebrews was trying to get folks to remember this. We are set apart for holy purposes by God and claimed as siblings by Christ. These facts have done little to change human behavior over the years.

We have faulty memories. We are to treat each other with compassion, love, mercy, and kindness because we belong to God. The world is not ours to do with as we wish, but to tend on God's behalf. God created all that is. God's majesty is in all and through all. Just because we fail to be mindful of God does not mean that God is not mindful of us (Psalm 8). I don't think there is better news than this.

How many ways do we need to be told that God's love for us never ends? In the creation story God notices that one human alone is loneliness incarnate. God creates more so that no one will be alone. Not only will we not be alone, we will have the joy of tending God's creation and loving one another. The prophets will remind us when we forget how much God loves us.

Then Jesus renews and reshapes God's claim on us. It is not enough for us to love God or ourselves or neighbors or creation. We must love as God loves. We must love our neighbors and ourselves with a never-ending love.

Our failure to see who and whose we are does not change how God sees us. God remains mindful of the particularity that is each human being, even when we forget that we are created in love for love. God's love for us does not end when we forget that we are made in God's image or that our neighbors are as well. Jesus claims us as siblings so that we will claim all our neighbors as God's beloved children. We haven't learned how to love one another just yet, but that doesn't mean we aren't set aside for this sacred purpose. Nor does it mean that Jesus was wrong about who we are.