

Fourth Sunday of Lent - Year C (30th March - Mothering Sunday)

John 19.25b-27

A Sermon by Corinne Craymer, Lay Worship Leader

A very short gospel reading today belies the depth of meaning in it. Jesus speaks from the cross during his dying moments to those at his feet waiting with him, his mother and beloved disciple John, alongside the other women, his mother's sister, and Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene. It is interesting to note that these women were the last at the cross and the first at the tomb to know of the risen Christ.

This scene in John's gospel is very closely connected to one of the first scenes in his gospel about a marriage in Cana. There Jesus begins his earthly ministry with a sign of God's bountiful presence; on the cross he completes it. In Cana he tells his mother that his hour has not yet come; on the cross his hour has arrived. His mother asks him to save the wedding feast by turning water into wine, on the cross water and blood flow from his side. Celebration and mourning reflecting Christ's journey in this world.

From the cross Jesus tells us what the meaning of family should be for us all. He shows us how under the kingdom of Christ our biological family matters very much, but God's family matters just as much. The idea of family is extended to all those who care for each other. Those who attach themselves to Jesus are his family.

We know that Jesus had brothers. Why doesn't he ask them to look after his mother? Because he knows John's loving heart. To his mother he says, 'Woman here is your son'. And to John he says, 'Here is your mother'. In his dying moments Jesus does a new thing. He creates adoption.

This is not the first time that Jesus has spoken dramatically about kindred and revealed the way of heaven. In Matthew's gospel we read how Jesus was told that his mother and brothers were waiting to speak to him. And what did he say that caused so much surprise? 'Who is my mother and who are my brothers?' Then pointing towards his disciples he exclaimed, 'here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother'. Jesus cannot be any clearer on this matter.

This world is full of people who care for those who are not necessarily their own blood and some who lovingly reach out to those in need of family. We have kinship carers, often a grandmother who cares for her grandchild or grandchildren. We have children who care for their disabled parents. We have families who foster children who would otherwise not have a family to grow up with. We have people who long for a child of

their own and are prepared to go through the long process of adoption. In this we follow what Jesus has spoken of from the cross, the heavenly ideal of love and care.

Today is Mothering Sunday. It's a day that for many of us is filled with both sad and happy remembrances. For some it's a day of mourning for a mother who we never knew. For yet others it's a day filled with gratitude for all the love and care we received from the people who raised us whether biological family or not. For what truly matters is the loving goodwill of human beings.

We live in a world that is so often in turmoil. Wars, terror atrocities, plagues, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, accidents of every kind and losses that make us weep in despair. Yet here we are today in loving community, looking to support each other in so many ways. The love of which I'm speaking comes from knowing Christ and what he has done for us. It comes from knowing we are all adopted sons and daughters of a God who first loved us. We need to see how we value one another and take this understanding out into this difficult world in which we live. Christ asks this of us from the cross.

Today let's remember all the services and agencies that work in the fostering and adoption arena. Let's remember families who care not only for their own but for the rejected and lost and lonely. Let's remember those who cared for us, and if we have reservations, let's remember that God loves each one of us beyond measure and ask Him to heal us and give us His peace. Amen.