

‘Here is your mother’ John 19:26-27 John 7:1-5

“When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved [John] standing near by, he said to her, ‘Woman, here is your son,’ and to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.”

1. This is the third sermon in our series on the words Jesus spoken from the cross. Jesus is totally unselfish here. At the moment of his deepest need he still thinks of others. He still thinks of us. His care for his mother is moving. This is in sharp contrast with the soldiers who are guarding him, who are only interested in their own gain (23-24).

These words are Jesus’ testament. He has nothing else to give away. He has no more clothes to give away. At the same time they are a command. John and his mother have to obey.

Jesus still thinks of them. He still thinks of us. Of you and me. We can be grateful for his great care for each one of us!

2. Mary has already suffered during the ministry of Jesus. Her life has not been easy. Is she now standing by the cross in silence? Who knows how much she is actually crying, shouting, screaming? The Bible does not tell us.

In all ages many women have lost sons to accidents, wars, to murders. Being a mother is often hard.

But stop!! By focusing on Mary’s suffering, I might be doing what I spoke against last week. We should not reflect on how bad the suffering of Jesus was; nor on the suffering of his mother or the other people around the cross.

3. In this saying from the cross Jesus connects two people. Is that romantic? Today is Mothering Sunday, which is often presented as a highly romantic moment. Does John describe a romantic picture? No. This is not a love affair; it’s a practical necessity. After the resurrection, Jesus won’t live ‘at home’ anymore. As the eldest son, Jesus has to organise care for his widowed mother, like so many in Britain and all over the world have to do.

The beloved disciple does not need a mum. He is an adult; he already owns his own house. But he gets given the duty of care. Mary needs an identity, a carer. It is important to note that Mary’s sons, Jesus’ half-brothers, are disqualified because they are not followers of him (John 7:5).

Jesus acts in love but there’s no romance here. This is practical care. Jesus forges a connection that runs along the lines of faith, not the lines of blood. He connects two of his closest followers. As one commentator wrote, ‘The ties of the believing community must be stronger than natural familial bonds.’ So we see here the nucleus of a new, spiritual family.

It turns out that this sermon could have been one in our series on the church a while ago. In this light, we as congregation are all carers for each other. And every Sunday is a kind of Mothers’ Day as we meet with our family! (and miss those who are not there!)

4. Jesus foregoes his stepbrothers and connects his mother to his friend. He asks us to put earthly relations lower down the order of priority. Our connection to Jesus and to each other in the church surpasses, transcends, blood ties. In his family we are all sons and daughters, sisters and brothers. When we meet, it’s mothers’ day and fathers’ day and children’s day.

This is a comfort for people who have no natural children and for those who are single on earth. As brothers and sisters in Christ, Jesus want us to sit close together and to care for each other. We are his adopted brothers and sisters, adopted children of God [see the Romans course episode 6], and so we want to care for each other. If not, something is wrong.

Jesus redefines what family is. See also Matthew 12:49-50: "Pointing to his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.'"

This inclusivity, this family-spirit, has been a strength of Christianity through the ages, until the coming of romanticism and individualism with their emphasis on romantic love and individual choice. Let's regain this strength. We are one family in Christ and every Sunday is mothers' and fathers' day!