

*“Behold Your Son”<sup>i</sup>*  
**Sunday, March 12, 2017**  
**Second Sunday in Lent**

 **John 19:26-27 (NRSV)**

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, *“Woman, here is your son.”*

Then he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.”  
And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

This is the Word of God for the people of God.

*Thanks, be to God.*

**[2<sup>ND</sup> Service: Affirmation of Faith]**

**[MESSAGE]**

What’s the first thing you think of when you hear the word *“family”*?

Mother, father, sister, brother, cousins,  
grandparents – they sound like family.

Love, support, fun, loyalty, sharing – these might come to mind.

Our family is important to us; we are connected by blood and history to the people in our family.

We will defend our family members and stand with them, even when they're in trouble.

This is the essence of the “*family values*” we talk about so often.

“Family values” seems to have had a different meaning for Jesus.

As a baby, there were questions about his paternity and his birth was an embarrassment for some family members.

As a child, he had a problem with parental authority as he disappeared to go sit with the Rabbis at Temple.

As a young man, he went with his mother to a friend's wedding party.

When they ran out of wine, Mary asked Jesus to help; he brushed her off with, “*Woman, what does that have to do with you or me?*”

Once he started his ministry, he thought nothing of disrupting a family fishing business to recruit followers, telling them to abandon everything to follow him.

“*I’ve come to turn father against son, mother against daughter,*” he said in Matthew’s gospel.

To the man who would follow after his father’s funeral, Jesus said, “*Let the dead bury the dead.*”

Once while Jesus was teaching, someone told him his mother and brothers were outside asking for him. Jesus said, “*Who are my mother and my brothers*”

Jesus and his family weren’t exactly The Brady Bunch.

**Let us pray**...Lord, help us understand what you are saying from the cross today. How are we to interpret your words? Who is really part of our family, the family of God? Give us ears to hear and hearts to understand. In Jesus' name, we pray.  
**Amen.**

This morning we hear as Jesus speaks to his mother for the last time.

It is heartbreaking as we realize what he means and how deeply Mary must be grieving.

Behold your son who you are giving up for the sinful people of the world who have treated him so badly.

In a sense, it is the love only a mother can offer; love that is strong enough to give away.

For Mary in particular we remember the words of old Simeon who predicted, "*A sword will pierce your heart,*" when he saw the baby Jesus.

From the very beginning, it was not easy to be the Mother of the Son of God.

From Gabriel's visit, through public questioning, to a challenging birth, and then raising a child whose destiny was already fixed; Mary had a tough time.

And now, from the cross, Jesus reminds her of her breaking heart.

Because he is obedient to the will of God, because he does not waver from his mission, Jesus ends up causing great pain for his family.

*“Woman, behold your son;”* she must have wept bitterly.

But this word has a second part today; Jesus speaks to John, the beloved disciple.

*“Son, behold your mother.”*

I think this is much more than simply asking his friend to look after Mom when he's gone.

His message here is clearly for *both* of them **and** **for us.**

As he brings John and Mary together, this man who disrupted so many conventional families during his lifetime is now creating a new kind of family.

It is unconventional because it does not depend on the traditional bonds of the nuclear family.

In that time, family of origin was your whole life; it determined your complete identity and your entire future.

Your family determined your occupation and your choice of spouse; it even determined the place you would live your whole life.

As Jesus encouraged people to leave their family to follow him, he was assaulting the family values that had served the Jewish people for centuries.

In our own culture, most of us try to maintain strong family ties and we often talk about how our family has helped to define who we have become.

As good as they are, however, our families are narrow and restricted to small groups of relatives.

The church offers us something else in Baptism.

Here we are thrown together with a bunch of strangers and are forced to call these people with whom we have no natural affinity and very little in common, “*sister*” and “*brother*”.

In Baptism, we are adopted into a family large enough to make our lives more interesting.

“*A new commandment I give to you,*” Jesus said, “*love one another as I have loved you.*” (John 13:34)

Listen closely. Jesus is forming the first church with these words.

He’s commanding us to live as if all those strangers and foreigners and sinners *He loved* were our relatives; our family.

Jesus entrusts his own mother into the hands of this man whose only connection to him is love.

From this moment, never again could the world say *family* without Jesus’ people thinking “*church.*”

If we think back to that day when they came to Jesus saying, “*Your mother and brothers are looking for you,*” Jesus responded saying, “*Whoever does the will of my Father, he is my brother.*”

In this way, Jesus is naming and claiming a new family for himself; a family that includes all these disciples around him.

Now anyone, even his own relatives, who tries to follow Jesus is one of the Family.

From the cross, this third word from Jesus disrupts our traditional understanding of “family” in order to free us and give us a new, bigger family.

He detaches us spiritually from our parents to give us a new “Parent” – God the Father.

Apart from the family into which we are born, we are given a new, expanded, and more universal family.

This does not change our family of origin, nor does it take away from the love we feel naturally for our birth family.

Family is a place of learning and growth and grace for us.

Sometimes, however, family can also be a limitation with narrow expectations and impossible demands.

Bishop Will Willimon tells a story about when he was a campus minister. He spoke to a graduating senior who was an active participant in campus ministry, *“I want to meet your parents on graduation weekend.”*

*“I wouldn't advise that,”* the young woman said, *“my mom is really angry with you.”*

*“Why would your mother be angry with me? We've never met,”* he asked.

*“She blames you for the fact that I'm thinking about going into work with the poor. She liked the old me she once had better than the new me who's working with Jesus.”*

Isn't it just like Jesus to disrupt our comfortable families?

At the foot of the cross, we who thought we were so different because of race, gender, or tribe for once stand together, chanting in unison, “*Crucify him!*” It’s not a pretty sight; sin seldom is.

From the cross, Jesus stares into this crowd of crucifiers, sinners, and thrusts us together through his loving solidarity.

We, who once cared only for those people who shared our genetics, are now made to care for those with whom we have nothing in common except for Jesus.

We find ourselves calling someone “sister” whom we once viewed as a threatening stranger.

That is one of the gracious, demanding by-products of standing at the foot of the cross.

**We find ourselves in “*The Body of Christ.*”**

Now you may think that, sometimes, your family can be a pain in the neck.

If you think your family has problems, consider this family you've been adopted into, thanks to Jesus.

One of the toughest challenges of Jesus isn't just Jesus; it is Jesus' closest friends.

Always remember that a major justification for the crucifixion of Jesus was the creepy company he kept.

So look around the room this morning; see who's gathered here at the foot of the cross.

Many of these folks you hardly know; some you have nothing in common with.

Pray that God will give you grace to be able to see these strangers as your siblings.

Pray to God that they'll be given the grace to see you as a close relative.

All the inadequacies and problems that you had growing up in your family are being healed.

The One who had no conventional family, who  
fathered no children, has been busy forming the  
largest family the world has ever known.

Behold you son, your daughter;  
behold your brother, your sister;  
behold your family in Christ.

***Welcome home!***

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

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<sup>i</sup> This worship series is based on the book, "*Thank God It's Friday*" by William H. Willimon, © 2006 by Abingdon Press, Nashville