

Well happy Mother's Day! I know the real name is Mothering Sunday and we'll get to that in a minute but whatever you call it, it's a strange one isn't it. We can't take mum out for lunch. We can't meet together at church and give out daffodils. We're worried and distracted and just longing for everything to get back to normal. Because nothing seems normal.

I wonder though if there might be a gift in the middle of all of that for us today. Because most years when we come to church on mother's day, although we are all smiling at each other there are always members of our church family who find today far from normal or easy. That's not to take away at all from the opportunity to tell mums how great they are and spoil them a bit. But for lots of us, mums or not there are all sorts of feelings today.

There are those who grieve today and miss their mums who are no longer with us. Those who aren't in touch with their mum or where it's a really difficult relationship. Those who really want to be a mum but for different reasons it hasn't happened. Those who are finding being a mum hard... much, much harder than anyone realises.

Those who are alone and lonely at home most of the week.

For lots of us, for lots of our church family on an ordinary year, a year where everything is "normal" today is complicated, or painful.

Now before we all get even more depressed today we're going to launch into the very short passage from the gospel of John which is set for us today. And we'll see how actually every year, and maybe especially this year it gives us something so much bigger and more wonderful...

It's taken from John's account of Jesus being crucified and it's in *John 19:25-27*

Oh and by the way when we read it it's helpful to know that the phrase "the disciple Jesus loved" is the way John refers to himself. So here it is

*While the soldiers were looking after themselves, Jesus' mother, his aunt, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene stood at the foot of the cross. Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing near her. He said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that moment the disciple accepted her as his own mother.*

As Jesus hung there and said those words to his mum "Here is you son"

and to his friend and disciple John, "Here is your mother"

he showed that because of what he did at the cross we all have a new family.

And here's the thing, that's not just a nice way to describe us, it's real.

Jesus didn't say "Mary treat John like your son. And John please will you look after Mary as though she's your mother..."

He said, “here *is* your son. Here *is* your mother.

That’s pretty mind blowing if we let it sink in. At the heart of our faith is the astonishing reality that at Christmas, God became part of a human family and at Easter we became part of a divine family.

I’ll say that again, at Christmas, God became part of a human family and at Easter we became part of a divine family.

God beautifully mixed up and gloriously messed up what we usually mean by “family” and made it something so much bigger and more powerful.

God became part of a human family and opened the way for us to become part of His divine family.

And the thing is we often use those sorts of Christian words. We talk about our church family, our Christian brothers and sisters. But if we’re honest we don’t believe in the depths of our being that it’s any more than a nice image, that it’s the actual reality.

Lots of us had that horrible experience in the shops last week with the empty aisles. No loo rolls. No eggs. No pasta. And I have to confess when I first saw all those empty aisles there was a really strong desire in me to buy loads for *my family*. To make sure *my family* has enough. I managed to resist it – maybe because Louise was with me and she’s much holier than me and she would have told me off. But did you notice my thinking... “my family”. And I’m really sorry but when that thought filled my mind I didn’t have you in mind. I know you are my church family – and for those at St Barnabas it’s been lovely to get to know you as we’ve worshipped with you over the past year.

But I need Jesus to touch my heart more deeply and convert my thinking and feeling much more, because you *are* my family.

Right now nothing is normal.

And we are praying that this terrible epidemic will come to a much quicker end than expected.

And we’re praying for those we know who are vulnerable or isolated or frightened.

Let’s also pray that in this time when nothing is normal that God helps us to see that what we usually think is normal is far from his reality. And opens our eyes to those who are so often vulnerable or isolated or frightened when things are “normal”. When the world seems to be fine. And opens our hearts to much more of what it really means to be His family.

Here is your mother. Here is your son. Here is your father, here is your daughter, here is your sister, here is your brother.

His unstoppable, uncontainable, unimaginable love meant that because of Christmas God became part of a human family, and because of Easter we've become part of a divine family.

Let's pray

Discussion questions:

- What have you been most grateful for this week?
- How do you usually feel on a "normal" Mothering Sunday?
- What's one thing you love about church as a family?
- What might be different if we all believed much more deeply that we really are family?
- What opportunities are there for you during this strange to discover more of that reality?