



***Sermon: 11 May 2025***

***Rev. Brian Turner***

***John 19:25b-27***

***1. Who is my Mother?***

This reading is interesting in that it extends the concept of mother from a strict kinship or biological relationship to one of compassion and caring for one another.

Again, the words attributed to Jesus from the Cross: to His Mother Jesus said of the Disciple, “Woman, here is your Son” and to the Disciple, “Here is your Mother”.

If your experience is similar to mine, there are other women (and men) who have had a parenting role in our upbringing and further development.

From an early age, as my parents’ marriage deteriorated, my brother and I were first farmed out to my father’s sister, Alice, and Jack, her husband in Whangarei. Later, my brother went into a prep school, Wellesley College in Days Bay Wellington and I went to my Mother’s youngest sister Doreen, and husband Bob on Waiheke Island.

Both aunties and uncles were marvellous substitute parents to me during those more vulnerable primary school years, and especially, the aunties as substitute mothers.

My bond with my own Mother remained strong, although that became increasingly difficult as her mental condition worsened. But I owe to her a lot of the values I hold dear: her willingness to reach out to the vulnerable in society; her grounding in Tikanga Māori during her younger years living in the strongly Māori community of Mokai, north of Taupo, where her father was a timber company tally clerk.

Her own Mother, my maternal Grandmother, contributed to that value base with her suffragette supporting background in England before she emigrated to New Zealand.

That Grandmother, in my secondary college years at Wesley College Paerata, was a great support person. From Devonport where she lived in a very humble dwelling, she would catch a bus to the ferry, then after the ferry to downtown Auckland, a bus out to Paerata near Pukekohe before returning the same arduous route to her home.

I never forgot her devotion to me and when I returned to Auckland after 5 years farming, I did what I could for her during ministerial training and my first parish in Auckland, during which she went into care.

So today as Mother's Day, although in some denominations it is called "Home & Family Sunday"; today we remember and give thanks, not only for our biological mothers, but also the other women and men who parented us and nurtured our development in a myriad of ways.

## ***Matthew 12:46-50***

### **2. True Relatives**

At first glance it appears that Jesus is rather hard on His Mother and siblings.

According to a similar passage in Mark; chapter 3, Jesus' Mother and siblings were concerned that He was overdoing things and wanted Jesus to slow down and that's why they sought Him out.

His response tells us that He also saw as His family, those who were fulfilling the will of His Father, and surely the same principle applies to us as His followers.

Responsibility to family is fine and honourable, but as followers of God in Christ we have a wider and often deeper responsibility.

So, on this Mother's Day or Home & Family Sunday, that means we have a wider and deeper responsibility to help mother and parent and care for all God's creation and especially those most at risk, both human-wise in those on the margins of society and those aspects of God's creation also at risk; God's total creation of land, sea, river, ecosystems, and especially populations of people and other species most at risk.

Sometimes the two layers of responsibility will be difficult to manage: responsibility for family versus responsibility for God in Christ's wider family and indeed, all of creation.

Both callings are necessary; to family and to God's wider creation. As Mother Teresa, featured on the front of our order of service, puts it; it's "Doing ordinary things with extraordinary love."

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