

**“Woman, here is your son.” Then he said to the disciple,  
“Here is your mother.”**

*John 19:26–27*

**Bible Verse(s):**

*John 19:26–27* - 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.

**Reflection:**

Individual responses to the current crisis have been fantastic. A call for 250,000 volunteers for the NHS met the target in 24 hours and is now around three quarters of a million... In New York 80,000 people came forward to volunteer for their health service before an appeal had been made. As we all know, it’s not just at a national level. The response – person to person – throughout the country has been worthy of the best in humanity. I have been very moved by the number of people who have contacted me to offer help. Some I scarcely know at all – one lady had to introduce herself when we met by chance as I was putting out the bin. There is an outpouring of care in the face of the pandemic.

In my time of isolation, I have mused on the nature of love, for that must be the quality from which this abundant offering of care must spring. And there can be no better example of love-in-action than St John’s account of Jesus’ encounter with his mother and disciple whilst hanging on the cross. None of the other Gospels contains an account anything like this. St John has Jesus, crucified, his death impending, yet making explicit arrangements for the welfare of his mother after his death. I have no doubt that Jesus loved his mother nor that he felt the obligation to make arrangements for her welfare. That obligation springs out of love. It’s the sort of thing a good son or daughter might do: arranging for care is a the sort of thing many of us do. ‘Look after Mum’ is a worthy aim but would it merit inclusion in the Gospel if it meant nothing more. Which makes me ask, why did St John pick on this event?

We know that throughout his ministry, Jesus is motivated by God’s love. We hear a lot about God’s love. Jesus himself said ‘As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.’ The purpose of St. John’s account is to show us God’s love in action. Jesus is caught in the horrific circumstances of his crucifixion and impending death. He is stripped even of the clothes he stood in, heading for a death meted out to those whom the Roman state deemed to be the worst of criminals. In social terms, he could not fall any further. And yet, instead of resentment or self-pity or even dwelling on the physical agony he must have felt, Jesus thought of his mother. This is Jesus showing us love transcending any regard of self. It is unselfish to a degree we find impossible to comprehend; outgoing and abundant. This vignette is a terrible but perfect example of the love of God in action. I think that is why St John gives us this account.

I think of this account when I see and hear the community and personal responses to the pandemic. Such a wide range of people who are motivated – anxious - to do their bit. Those who volunteer are wanting to use their time and energies to ensure others in actual or potential difficulties are helped. I'm sure that most of them would not categorise their motive as 'love'. It certainly isn't the kind that features on Valentine cards or the sickly displays paraded in celebrity magazines. But it seems to me to be exactly of the quality that Jesus displayed on the cross. Thankfully the circumstances are different, but the difference is in degree not in kind. That love may seem to be buried for much of the time, but adversity has brought it out. Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if, when the threat is over, there is a continued outpouring of that love for a world that is badly in need of some TLC.