MEDITATION 32

Mark 3: 31-35

31 Then Jesus' mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called
him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your
brothers[a] are outside asking for you." 33 And Jesus replied, "Who are my mother and my
brothers?" 34 And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my
brothers! 35 Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

What is going on with Jesus and his family? His family seem very concerned about Jesus as he is mobbed by crowds desperate for healing. Do they want to protect him? Are they trying to understand what he, as the eldest, is up to as head of the family with no father any longer among them? Has Jesus simply separated himself from his family and is that a good thing?

And then there's Jesus' response to the crowd about his family. It's as if he is abandoning his biological family and replacing it with the new family that are becoming his followers. Is this a good thing? Has Jesus simply decided that if his family don't join the crowd of his followers and disciples like others, they no longer have a share in him?

Many of us have had challenging relationships with our families. Even as some of us may feel well understood and supported by our families, others of us have felt misunderstood and criticized. Some of us have even had to create a distance with some family member. And some of us still have had to find family outside our biological one.

As precious and beloved as our families may be, relationships can be complicated in any number of ways. Is there dependence or co-dependence in a way where we have not flourished and have not learned to find our own way and our own voice? Are there burdens that are not equally distributed within our family? Is there one family member in particular who dominates by their mood or their needs? Is there hurt in us, anger or grief that is complicated and unresolved? Has our self-esteem been damaged by the criticism?

There is so much in all this for us, isn't there? Families are wonderful gifts and they are challenging realities we all have to negotiate.

Are we able to come to that place of gratitude? For some of us that may be easy, but for others of us not at all.

Are we able to come to some peace, to let go, to find some grace and even compassion for how the wounds of life have affected those who have caused wounding in us?

We can only seek healing for ourselves even as others are invited to seek healing for themselves. We cannot force another to confront how they may have done harm to us even as we hope and pray they do. And for some family relationships the damage is too severe for healing to be a realistic possibility, and in some cases death also makes final resolution impossible. And yet, how may we continue to find our way to healing for ourselves and compassion for others who have suffered where we have not?

PRAYER: We come before you, O God, with all our hurts and our wounds…
We come before you, O God, with all our gratitude for the love that has formed us and supported us in coming to be where we are and who we are…
And all of this, the good and the bad, has been very much part of our family life, O God…

Grant us humility and compassion if we are among the fortunate ones…
Fill our hearts with thanksgiving for the gift that has been and is ours…

Grant us healing, comfort and peace if we are the unfortunate ones who may still carry some bitterness or grief…
Heal us of the pain we feel for lost loved ones or those within our family who have suffered…
Help us find assurance for all we have tried to do and be for a family member and yet still not feel it was enough…
Help us find resolution in you even as there may not be resolution with a family member at this time or while they were alive.

And may we find some sense of family in other ways too, O God, with those in our circle of care within church or other networks of friendship and community.

In Jesus' name; Amen.