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Scripture

Mark 3:31-4:9

^{3:31}Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. ³²A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you." ³³And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" ³⁴And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." ^{4:1}Again he began to teach beside the lake. Such a very large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the lake and sat there, while the whole crowd was beside the lake on the land. ²He began to teach them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: ³"Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. ⁶And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. ⁸Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold." ⁹And he said, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"

Devotional

There's always hope
Hope in death
It brands these bonds
Refines the rest
(from "These Days are Numbered" by The Head and the Heart)

Our Gospel text for today narrates the death of a preferred image of Jesus. Mark 3:31 begins in the middle of a cluster of stories held together by Jesus' return home in 3:19b. After teaching, drawing crowds, and performing miraculous signs, Jesus returns home, and his family, certain that Jesus has gone crazy, attempts to restrain him. At the same time, the Scribes accuse him of demonic dealings. After telling the Scribes that "a house divided against itself cannot stand," Mark turns the story back to Jesus' family, where Jesus indirectly addresses their concerns by redefining kinship. Mark narrates an enigma. Jesus refuses to be defined by the images that skeptics (the Scribes) and the faithful (the family) have for him. In his mercy toward us, he is wholly his own. We, therefore, can receive and respond to him, but we cannot construct or contain him. May we hear, see, and receive Jesus in unexpected ways this day.

Prayer (Psalm 103)

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and do not forget all his benefits—
who forgives all your iniquity,

who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the Pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
who satisfies you with good as long as you live
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
The Lord works vindication
and justice for all who are oppressed.
He made known his ways to Moses,
his acts to the people of Israel.
The Lord is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
Bless the Lord, O my soul.