

**As this is a fourth Sunday, Sue was already down to lead worship and had already prepared the worship for today..... thank you Sue!**

## **Morning Worship 22 March 2020**

### **Call to worship**

God our Father,  
your Son, Jesus Christ,  
lived in a family at Nazareth.  
As we meet together now  
help us to learn more about what it is  
to love our families and friends as you love us.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
Amen.

### **Celebrating mothers and others**

Mothering Sunday is a tradition dating from the Middle Ages. Originally a time to focus on 'mother church', it became a day when young girls, in service away from home, could visit their mothers. Today, despite gloomy statistics about family breakdown, there remains a deeply rooted longing to celebrate all that is best about the family, embodied particularly by the role motherhood plays.

### **Prayer**

We thank God for giving us others to share in our lives:  
for parents, and the love which brought us to birth:  
we praise you, O Lord, and bring you thanks today.

For mothers, who have cherished and nurtured us:  
we praise you, O Lord, and bring you thanks today.

For fathers, who have loved and supported us,  
we praise you, O Lord, and bring you thanks today.

For brothers and sisters, with whom we have shared our home:  
we praise you, O Lord, and bring you thanks today.

For children and their parents:  
we praise you, O Lord, and bring you thanks today.

For other relatives and friends,  
who have been with us in our hopes and joys  
and in times of sadness:  
we praise you, O Lord, and bring you thanks today.

For all who first spoke to us of Jesus,  
and have drawn us into the family of our Father in heaven:  
we praise you, O Lord, and bring you thanks today.

Help us to live as those who belong to one another,  
and to you, our Father,  
now and always.  
Amen.

### **Children's Message**

Please think of some of the words that can be found in **MOTHERING SUNDAY** (eg RING, MOTH.....

I would like us to explore some of the words that can be found together:

**Hugs:** Most mums and those who care for us are good at hugs. When we feel hurt, sad or rejected, a hug can tell us how much we are loved and accepted.

**Naughty one:** This is cheating really, as it is two words. But it is worth considering for it helps us to think about mothers and understand something about Jesus. For however naughty we are, good mothers always forgive us. Jesus came to teach us that God, too, always forgives.

**Doing:** Parents and those who care for us spend lots of time 'doing' things. Just think of all the washing, ironing, cooking, cleaning, shopping, taxi driving, helping with homework and so on. One of the best ways of learning is by doing things together. Think about what you do together: parents and children; grandparents, parents and children; friends and children and parents.

**Strength:** Parents need and show lots of strength. Being a parent is the most important job in the whole world and you need to be strong to do it – and the world needs to recognise and value the strength it takes.

**Nurse:** Parents sometimes have to take upon the role of a nurse. Think of the times they have to decide if you need to miss school and then need lots of loving care.! Parents and those who care for us hold us in their hands just like God cares for us.

### **Reading 1: Isaiah 49: 14-16**

<sup>14</sup> But the people of Jerusalem said,

“The Lord has abandoned us!  
He has forgotten us.”

<sup>15</sup> So the Lord answers,

“Can a woman forget her own baby  
and not love the child she bore?

Even if a mother should forget her child,  
I will never forget you.

<sup>16</sup> Jerusalem, I can never forget you!

I have written your name on the palms of my hands.

### **Reading 2: Luke 2.25-35**

<sup>25</sup> At that time there was a man named Simeon living in Jerusalem. He was a good, God-fearing man and was waiting for Israel to be saved. The Holy Spirit was with him <sup>26</sup> and had assured him that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's promised Messiah. <sup>27</sup> Led by the Spirit, Simeon went into the Temple. When the parents brought the child Jesus into the Temple to do for him what the Law required, <sup>28</sup> Simeon took the child in his arms and gave thanks to God:

<sup>29</sup> “Now, Lord, you have kept your promise,  
and you may let your servant go in peace.

<sup>30</sup> With my own eyes I have seen your salvation,

<sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples:

<sup>32</sup> A light to reveal your will to the Gentiles  
and bring glory to your people Israel.”

<sup>33</sup> The child's father and mother were amazed at the things Simeon said about him. <sup>34</sup> Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, "This child is chosen by God for the destruction and the salvation of many in Israel. He will be a sign from God which many people will speak against <sup>35</sup> and so reveal their secret thoughts. And sorrow, like a sharp sword, will break your own heart."

## **Message**

In our gospel reading we hear how Jesus is presented in the Temple. Simeon, who has waited for the Christ child to come, now blesses the child and speaks to Mary, his mother.

I am going to try and explore with you four things that Simeon spoke about using more words which can be made from MOTHERING SUNDAY.

**Rise** 'This child is destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel'

In his ministry Jesus came and mixed with those who felt they did not matter to anyone. They were considered unimportant, external to society. He helped such people to know they were accepted by God and of great value to him. This is still true today. Jesus will accept us as we are because everyone is special to God. Can we do likewise?

**Hated** 'a sign that will be opposed'

Jesus was hated by the leaders of the day whom he denounced. This is what Simeon was talking about in verse 34. No parent likes the thought that their child will be unpopular, but sometimes people have to stand up for what is right. Can we do this and do we stand beside others who do?

**Hearts** 'the inner thoughts of many will be revealed'

A great deal of parenting seems to be about external activities. We looked earlier at the word 'doing'. Modern research into human development is revealing just how important the experience of being loved is to brain development. In babies, the learning pathways in the brain grow as a response to emotional experiences. Although the Gospel writers did not benefit from the insights of modern science, it is interesting to learn just how perceptive and thoughtful are the writings of the ancient religious teachers. They did not know the science, but they did know what they saw. The Bible is full of writings about the importance of love, and the importance of God's love, often using those beautiful metaphors of parent and child. Our inner thought matter to each other and God knows them. In his prayer with the Father, Jesus showed us a perfect relationship of communication, communion, between father and child.

**Hurts** 'and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

These are disturbing words for anyone to hear. We do not know what Mary made of them but, because we know the whole story, we know that these words of Simeon proved to be correct. And because we know the whole story, we can also assume that Mary, with the other disciples, knew also the joy of the resurrection on the third day.

Parenting is not a pain-free process, and there is no pain-free life. But in sending his Son to live a human life and die on the cross, God showed us that he understands this and that he suffers beside us.

But in the resurrection, he showed, too, that Jesus conquered sin and death and has opened the way to God for everyone. As Easter approaches, we have a new opportunity to enter into this mystery and celebrate what God has done for us.

And today we remember Mary too, not just as a model of motherhood but also of Christian willingness to undergo suffering to further God's purposes. We can learn from her example of obeying God's will.

## **Prayer**

Living God - In our hour of need we turn again to you, for we have nowhere else to turn. We put our faith in you because you have proved your faithfulness time and again.

We pray for this pandemic spreading across our world, remembering all who have lost loved ones, and praying for those seriously ill at this time. We uphold the National Health Service as it responds to this added pressure on its already overstretched services. We pray for doctors & nurses and all in the caring professions.

May we not forget our responsibility to one another, not least the vulnerable and voiceless in our communities. Help us to find ways of keeping in touch and offering reassurance, to those with underlying health issues, for any who feel particularly vulnerable.

As the virus spreads, we pray for the disruption it causes to normal life, bringing new fears and anxieties. May congregations find new ways through this time. May we not forget our faith but draw strength from it.

God of grace and God of mercy, hear our prayers at this time. Strengthen us, by your spirit, so that: we may carry on our lives as best as we are able, looking out for others, showing love in action and bringing encouragement.

These prayers we bring to you in Jesus name.

Amen

## **Blessing**

**May God the Father keep us in his care.**

**May the Lord Jesus Christ be our constant friend**

**and the Holy Spirit guide us in all that we do,**

**now and always.**

**Amen.**