

Mothering Sunday 14th March 2021

Today is the 4th Sunday in Lent and commonly known as Mothering Sunday. There are lots of traditions linked to Mothering Sunday. Here in Britain and originally in much of Europe, we celebrate Mothering Sunday rather than Mother's Day as countries in other parts of the world. The difference historically is that the focus is not specifically mothers but the Mother Church. It was a day to go to the "mother" church often the cathedral or other large church in the area. Later it was a day when people working away from home, often as servants, would be given the day off to go to their own church with their mother and rest of their family.

Today we celebrate the mother aspect of our church family and also our own mothers. The extended family of the church is, for many people, the only family they have. It is good that we can join together today, all be it in our own homes, to affirm that aspect of church life with our brothers and sisters in Christ as well as our own families.

This reason to celebrate family both our own and our church family, seems, sadly to have been taken over as just another excuse for making money, the commercial interests of selling flowers, cards, presents, special meals seem to have swamped the original celebration of God's love for his children, for His family. In the bible reading we heard Paul's message to the Corinthians about love.

If we look at what Jesus said when he was asked what was important, really important, his reply was about Love. He told us to Love God, to Love our neighbours as ourselves in fact to love everyone, even our enemies.

In our reading we hear Paul's words about love and forgiveness. That love which shows itself as compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience surely sums up the love a mother has for her children. The same love that God has for each and every one of us. Paul tells us that above every other virtue, the most important is Love.

Back to the commercial aspects, don't get me wrong I'm not saying that spending money on mothers is a bad thing but I suspect that for many mothers they would prefer their children to spend time with them rather than sending a glorious bunch of flowers and a quick phone call. This year like last year we have the restrictions of the pandemic, but let's do as much as we can safely.

Mothers are special. Without a mother carrying us in her womb and going through the pain of giving birth - none of us would be here. Their love and the gift of life cannot be measured or have a value put on it. But I must look deeper at the cost that being a mother can bring.

Today we live in a world where conflict robs mothers of their children and children of their mothers in places like Syria. This week I watched a report from Syria. It is 10 years since the conflict escalated. It featured two grandmothers who were bringing up grandchildren. One had a grandson who lost a leg in the airstrike that killed his mother 10 years ago, his father was arrested by the police and disappeared. He was a baby being carried in his mother's arms when the airstrike killed her. The other in her 80's was trying to bring up two grandsons. Their parents died in another airstrike. The meal she prepared was three eggs, one each. She cried at the loss of her daughter and her inability to make things better for her grandsons.

I don't know if any of you will be watching Comic Relief next Friday. The compassion that is shown raises money for people here and globally. This year individuals and families around the world have the extra problem of the pandemic. Since it started the money raised has helped to support

19.1 million people across the UK and around the world. Hundreds of thousands of people are helped by simple acts of kindness through the money raised. In Africa and Asia three and a half million mothers have benefitted from increased access or awareness of maternal, neonatal and child health services. And that's just since Comic Relief's 2019's Red Nose Day.

We are all aware of the vast number of families whose lives have been affected by the pandemic. If ever there was a time for prayer and action it is now. In the reading Paul talks about grievances and instructs us to "Forgive as the Lord forgave you"

As Christians we can pray for resolution of conflicts, for peace to come, for healing, of those affected by the Covid virus and conflict in body mind and spirit. There is a saying that actions speak louder than words, or as we are told in James chapter 2, we will show others our faith by our deeds and that faith without deeds is dead. Based on that we need to put actions to our prayers and show compassion to those who could benefit from a kind word, a gift of time or of food or of money. James tells us that we will show others our faith by our deeds.

Jesus loved and valued everyone but made it clear that while today we hold our mothers in a special place, we must not forget the millions of mothers trying to bring up children in poverty.

Let us celebrate the gift of life from God that we received in our mother's womb. Let us honour our mothers and remember those mothers we no longer can see in this world. Let us give thanks for all we have, for our families, both church family and our relatives and let us remember that Jesus expects us to love and share what we have with Gods worldwide family. Our global family in Christ.

A Prayer for mothers

**Loving God,
as a mother gives life and nourishment to her children,
so you watch over your Church.
Bless these women,
that they may be strengthened as Christian mothers.
Let the example of their faith and love shine forth.
Grant that we, their sons and daughters,
may honour them always.
Grant this through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Reading Colossians 3:12-17

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Can I suggest you also read James 2:14-26 Faith and Deeds which I refer to in the reflection.

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

²⁰ You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ²¹ Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³ And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. ²⁴ You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

²⁵ In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? ²⁶ As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.