

Dorset South & West Written Service - Mothering Sunday 14th March 2021 4th in Lent,
prepared by Revd Steph Jenner

Welcome to Mothering Sunday, whether you are a mother or not, whether you have a mother living or not, in joy or in grief we come together today.

Psalm 139: 13 – 18 (NRSV) For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Hymn StF 372/H&P 281

1. Come down, O love divine,
seek thou this soul of mine,
and visit it with thine own ardour glowing;
O Comforter, draw near,
within my heart appear,
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

2. O let it freely burn,
till earthly passions turn
to dust and ashes, in its heat consuming;
and let thy glorious light
shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round,
the while my path illuming.

3. Let holy charity
mine outward vesture be,
and lowliness become mine inner clothing;
true lowliness of heart,
which takes the humbler part,
and o'er its own shortcomings
weeps with loathing.

4. And so the yearning strong,
with which the soul will long,
shall far outpass the power of human telling;
for none can guess its grace,
till they become the place
wherein the Holy Spirit makes her dwelling.

Bianco da Siena

Prayers of Praise and Confession

Loving God, we praise and worship you as creator of all that was, is and is to come. We praise and love you as parent to all your children, and we praise you that your love moves beyond our failings, our prejudices, our wrongdoings and wrong thinking. We praise you that each of us was brought to birth by our mother and we have the endless opportunities of living in this awesome world, help us to be worthy of this life.

But as a parent who is endlessly patient, please forgive us when we do get it wrong, when we lash out in frustration, when we pander to want instead of need, when we are selfish, not considerate and compassionate. Please help us to see our errors, admit and repent of our wrong doing and thinking, so that we may resume our life's journey with you and our sisters and brothers. In the name of Jesus, our heavenly brother, we pray. Amen.

Hymn StF 441

1. As water to the thirsty,
as beauty to the eyes,
as strength that follows weakness,
as truth instead of lies,
as songtime and springtime
and summertime to be,
so is my Lord,
my living Lord,
so is my Lord to me.

2. Like calm in place of clamour,
like peace that follows pain,
like meeting after parting,
like sunshine after rain,
like moonlight and starlight
and sunlight on the sea,
so is my Lord,
my living Lord,

so is my Lord to me.

3. As sleep that follows fever,
as gold instead of grey,
as freedom after bondage,
as sunrise to the day,
as home to the traveller
and all we long to see,
so is my Lord,
my living Lord,
so is my Lord to me.

Timothy Dudley-Smith

Exodus 2: 1 – 10 (NRSV)

Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him for three months. When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him. The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. 'This must be one of the Hebrews' children,' she said. Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?' Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Yes.' So the girl went and called the child's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages.' So the woman took the child and nursed it. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, 'because', she said, 'I drew him out of the water.'

Luke 13: 31 – 35 (NRSV)

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, 'Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.' He said to them, 'Go and tell that fox for me, "Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed away from Jerusalem." Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Prayers of Thanksgiving

For the mothering of mothers
and the mothering of fathers;
for the mothering of others:
Mothering God, we give you thanks.

For those who act as midwife to our hopes,
For those who nurse us through our pain,
For those who nurture, strengthen & guide us:
Mothering God, we give you thanks.

For those who gently push us from the nest,
For those who welcome us home,
For those who become our family,
For the Motherhood of the church:
Mothering God, we give you thanks. Amen

Hymn StF 119

1. God of Eve and God of Mary,
God of love and mother-earth,
thank you for the ones who with us
shared their life and gave us birth.
2. As you came to earth in Jesus,
so you come to us today;
you are present in the caring
that prepares us for life's way.
3. Thank you that the Church, our Mother,
gives us bread and fills our cup,
and the comfort of the Spirit
warms our hearts and lifts us up.
4. Thank you for belonging, shelter,
bonds of friendship, ties of blood,
and for those who have no children,
yet are parents under God.
5. God of Eve and God of Mary,
Christ our brother, human Son,
Spirit, caring like a Mother,
take our love and make us one!

Fred Khan

Reflection

I am very aware that for some of us Mothering Sunday is a day of celebration, while for others of us it is a very difficult day. So while those of us who are mothers, and have mothers with us, can look forward to a good day, those of us whose mother has died, is otherwise absent, and those who are not mothers, not necessarily by choice, may wish the day over. Today we reflect on mothering – mothering is not confined to biology, age or gender, it can be given and received by anyone and everyone.

Our readings today compare one of the well-known (I hope) Biblical stories of motherhood, of the birth story of Moses, and how a family, in a dangerous situation use their intelligence to ensure that a beloved son is kept safe and well and in touch with his birth family. His mother is willing to take a big risk, we don't know what happened to the other baby boys at this time, how many were slaughtered and whose parents never got over the trauma, how many were set adrift, but were never found, whose parents lived with the guilt. This son was saved, as was his brother Aaron, and they both, with sister Miriam, played a large part in history.

The story of a mother setting her son adrift is contrasted with Jesus in Luke's gospel, who is lamenting over Jerusalem, and how hostile it is to anyone who does good, but not how the establishment condone. Jesus likens his ministry to a mother hen gathering her chicks, to keep them safe, warm, nourished and out of danger from predators. Jesus should be a beacon of light to bring people together, to bring them to a safe place, where all is seen and all are loved, healed physically, mentally and spiritually, without fear or favour. But instead, the rulers have made him a target, because he upsets people, doesn't play their game, shows them up for what they are, and lifts up those who are demonised, blamed, poor, outcast.

In a toxic human world, where we seem so far from a heavenly realm, we see many 'rulers' demonising and blaming those who have a different world view to themselves. Those who speak up for the poor, the marginalised, those who are disadvantaged for no reason apart from another's prejudice, are put down, ridiculed and, in some cases killed. We look to Jesus in Jerusalem and long to be gathered to the mother hen, nurtured and cared for, until we are brave enough to step back into the world to resume seeking to gather all who are lost, who need care and compassion.

There will always be people who do not understand how human love and care, risk-taking and bravery are more valuable than money, status and power. But today, of all days, we remember what a mothering instinct can be like, how it can allow us to be ourselves, to grow and learn in security, and to be enabled to go into the world with confidence, knowing that there is always a safe haven in Jesus Christ when our wellbeing requires a recharge.

Mothering is an interesting concept, the Oxford English Dictionary defines it as 'the act of caring for and protecting children or other people' – so on Mothering Sunday, we look to care for and protect each other and ourselves. We can all do it, we can all benefit from it, so let's through safeguarding, through risk assessments, through conversation, through compassion, through opening our hearts and minds to share the love of God with all our sisters and brothers, wherever and whoever they are, in Jesus name.



Prayers of Intercession

Loving God, we worship you
for loving us like a mother loves her children:
as Creator, you care for our needs,
giving us the world to be our home,
providing us with food, shelter and a family;
as Saviour, you make our lives good,
healing us and teaching us,
helping us to grow to spiritual maturity;
as Spirit you bring harmony to our lives
filling us with inner security and peace,
enabling us to live as your true children.

We thank you for the nurturing love
we have received from others:
from our mothers, family members and
friends;
from Mother Church;
and we pray for all those who mother us....

We thank you that we can offer
a motherly care like yours to others:
loving them unconditionally;
meeting their physical and emotional needs.
and we pray for those we mother....

We pray for those who have not received
the motherly love that they need:
those whose mothers have died or left home;
those who have been neglected or abused;
those with mothers physically or mentally ill...

We pray for those caring for their own
parents because they are sick, old or infirm

We pray for those whose mother or father,
grandmother or grandfather, or other
mothering relative of friend, has died in the
last year....

We pray for those who have become parents
in the last year....

We pray for those whose children, born or
unborn, have died....

We pray for parents torn apart by the
sufferings of their children through war,
through poverty, through illness.

Loving God, we thank you that in Jesus
you have come close to us like a mother.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn StF 120

1. We gladly celebrate and praise,
the gift so great and good,
through which God's kindness
is made known:
the gift of motherhood.
2. We sing of Mary's mother-love:
for she, of all on earth,
received the privilege to bear
and bring God's Son to birth.
3. We pray that God's own mother-love
will hold in gentleness,
all children who have never known
a mother's tenderness.

4. For mothers, who with broken hearts,
are faced with grief and loss,
we pray the Son of God will give
deep comfort from his cross.
5. We trust the mother-love of God,
who bears, in Mary's boy,
our pain and sorrow,
to secure our everlasting joy.

Alan Gaunt

Blessing

God of love,
passionate and strong,
tender and careful:
watch over us and hold us
all the days of our life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen