

## Dorset South and West Circuit

### Mothering Sunday Service for Sunday 19 March. by Tony Boyden

#### Call to worship

God our Father, your Son, Jesus Christ, lived in a family at Nazareth. Help us to learn more about what it is to love our families and friends as you love us. Amen.

#### Hymn: **A Mother's Care** (tune: Quem Pastores)

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| <p>1. Spirit there in earth's first hour<br/>coaxing buds of life to flower<br/>gentle counterpart to power<br/>prelude to a mother's care.</p>           | <p>2. When we see the art of sharing,<br/>constant sacrificial caring,<br/>giving space and room for growing,<br/>then we see a mother's care.</p>      |
| <p>3. When our 'Mother Church' is open<br/>showing love, not worded tokens,<br/>circling round the lost and broken,<br/>then it shows a mother's care</p> | <p>4. Mother, father, foster parent.<br/>guardian, friend, devoted carer:<br/>may we thank the Lord, our maker<br/>for each 'mother's' loving care.</p> |
| <p>5. We reach out to you, Father,<br/>God, who tends us like a mother.<br/>Bind us close to one another<br/>in your 'mother's' tender care.</p>          | <p><i>(from 'Roots')</i></p>  |

#### Opening prayers

God of this vast and beautiful universe with its many secrets we're still trying to understand  
We are but one small part of the cosmos and though we might think you exist far beyond  
what our eyes can scan the miracle is that you are involved, close enough to know as close  
as the air that we breathe.

Jesus, Son of God, through coming into the world in human form you showed us a loving  
God, who cares for us and longs for us to know and love him; and the Holy Spirit is always at  
hand to encourage us and play a part in every aspect of our lives, giving us the  
understanding, strength and courage to speak to others of God's love.

And yet, Heavenly Father, parent of us all, too often we fail to treat each other as you want  
us to. There are times when we insist on over-riding others' feelings to get our own way  
and times when we say hurtful things to one another.

You sent your son Jesus to show us the true meaning of forgiveness  
Lord God, forgive us; and help us to be more loving. Amen.

#### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

### Gospel Reading Luke 2.25-35 NRSV

*Jesus is presented in the Temple according to Jewish law. Simeon, who has waited for the Christ child to come, now blesses the child and speaks to Mary, his mother.*

<sup>25</sup> Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. <sup>26</sup> It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. <sup>27</sup> Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, <sup>28</sup> Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, <sup>29</sup> 'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; <sup>30</sup> for my eyes have seen your salvation, <sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, <sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.' <sup>33</sup> And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. <sup>34</sup> Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed <sup>35</sup> so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

### Reflection: God's love and care.

A lady was celebrating her hundredth birthday- a lovely cake, a telegram from the Queen, a party with the family gathered round. Wonderful! She was asked if she had any worries. Her reply, 'No not now I have got my youngest son in a care home'.

I remember my Mum saying, long after I'd reached the age of 50, that she never stopped worrying about me. I laughed at what she said but I now realise, even though all our kids have passed the age of 40, how true that is. Throughout their lives, Roni and I have had to hold back while they made decisions and took risks, holding our breaths in the hope that things turn out right. And the worry can be two ways. Walking home from school, for instance, how many children have dragged their feet in dreaded anticipation of their parents' reaction to a poor school report!

'Mothering Sunday' has its origins in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when there were very few holidays, and children as young as 10 were in domestic service. They would be given the day off on this Sunday in Lent to visit their mothers and family. Often girls would bake a cake to show their mothers their new skills - a 'Simnel Cake'. As they walked home across the country, they would gather wild flowers to give to their mums as a gift, and to take to church.

Today has become a day to give thanks for the care of the Church, and to reflect on God's loving nature". It is also a time to express thanks to our mothers, and celebrate motherhood. It's natural for us to remember the happy times of childhood and those happy memories of our parents although, sadly for some, those times have been few and far between and we need to bear that in mind.

As parents we can remember wondering, what our child would grow up to be and do. Indeed, in the passage from Luke, Mary the mother of Jesus, treasured up all these things; and pondered them in her heart. As time goes by, most parents discover that the experience is a mixture of highs and lows, Joys and sorrows as time goes by. Surely whenever anyone truly loves, they experience moments of pure joy, and times of pain and heartache. Human relationships are never easy and being a mother, or father, is never simple. To love is hard work. It means making ourselves vulnerable in self-giving -

emotionally sharing in the lives of others.

Susanna, the mother of John Wesley, was convinced that his rescue from a fire at his father's rectory at Epworth, Lincolnshire in 1709 was a sign from God concerning young John. A brilliant teacher, she had strong views on the upbringing of her children. From an early age she made it clear to John that she wished he would take up Holy Orders. Clearly, she had some influence on the path his life took; a life which was a mixture of trials and triumphs -Joys and sorrows.

When Jesus was received in the temple by Simeon, he said that God was dismissing him in peace for salvation was clear to him. Despite Mary's joy at his words, Simeon spoke of sorrow that like 'a sword will pierce through your own soul too' I'm sure she will have remembered these incidents when she stood at the foot of the cross.

Just as life is full of highs and lows, so the Gospel is full of contrasts and choices. As Christians we are called upon to judge how we should act in a whole variety of situations and it is not always easy to see the right course. Often when we've made those choices, our faith can involve us in a struggle- spiritual, physical or emotional; or all three. Joy and pain - just as Jesus experienced Himself.

But through it all, Jesus offers us hope. For many reasons, Mothering Sunday can be a tough experience for people. Then it is good to remember God's love and care for all of us. We are his precious children and he shares our joy and our pain. He is there to embrace us with his loving and healing arm; ready to give us strength on our journey of faith. He can be the source of a new and fuller life for both us as individuals and our communities. He also offers us the hope of eternal life!

I began by saying that those of us with children never stop worrying about them. It's as well to remember that throughout our pilgrimage of faith, through the good times and the tough times, God's love is from everlasting to everlasting! Maybe he doesn't promise us an easy life, but he does promise to be with us! All we need to do, is turn towards him through all the changing scenes of life. Amen.

### **Prayer of Thanksgiving**

We thank God for giving us others to share in our lives: for parents, and the love which brought us to birth:

for mothers, who have cherished and nurtured us;

for fathers, who have loved and supported us;

for brothers and sisters, with whom we have shared our home;

for other relatives and friends, who have been with us in our hopes and joys and in times of sadness:

for all who first spoke to us of Jesus, and have drawn us into the family of God

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.

### **Prayers of Intercession** *(take time to reflect in silence between each section of the prayer)*

#### **For mothers and those who care for us**

Lord , you know well the blessings an earthly home can bring: receive our thanks for all the love we have received in our homes, especially from those who have nurtured us from our earliest years. Hear our prayers for mothers everywhere, that they may never lose heart nor ever be taken for granted, but receive from their children the honour and love you showed

to your mother, Mary, even as you were suffering on the cross. Bless and keep them all.

**For those in need**

Remember, O Lord, all those in need: people with no good food or proper clothes, no home of their own, or no work to do; those who have neither family nor friends and no knowledge of your love. Bless those who help them and bring us all to trust in you.

**For those who live alone**

Lord, we ask you to bless all who live alone, those who have lost their partner in marriage, those who have never married, those whose families are grown up and away from home, and those who have outlived other members of their families and many of their friends: Be with them to assure them of your love and of their value to you every moment of their lives, and enable them to rejoice in the fellowship of your Church on earth and in heaven.

**For those living in the cold harshness of insecurity and victimisation**

Lord, we ask you to draw on our own warm and secure experiences to bless us with the wisdom and empathy to help restore the lives of those who have been betrayed and who have suffered all manner of abuse

**For those beset by poverty and famine, by the impact of natural disasters and human aggression and war**

Lord, we pray for your guidance in seeking economic and social justice, peace and reconciliation throughout the world, and how to restore harmony and balance in your creation. We pray that you sustain us while we face the many great challenges involved in carrying out your will.

Reach out and touch, O healer of Galilee. Open our eyes to see goodness. Open our minds to find truth. Open our lives to know love through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

**Hymn: Lord for the years your love has kept and guided**

1 Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,  
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,  
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided:  
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

3 Lord, for our land in this our generation,  
spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care:  
for young and old, for commonwealth and nation,  
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

5. Lord for ourselves; in living power remake us-  
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne,  
past put behind us, for the future take us:  
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

2 Lord, for that word, the word of life which  
fires us,  
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,  
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us:  
Lord of the word, receive Your people's praise.

4 Lord, for our world when we disown and  
doubt him, loveless in strength, and  
comfortless in pain,  
hungry and helpless, lost indeed without him:  
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may  
reign.

*Timothy Dudley Smith (b 1926)*

**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.

