

Mothering Sunday 2021

Collect: 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.

Colossians 3.12–17: As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³ Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Gospel: John 19.25b–27: Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

Reflection:

Today we are remembering our mothers and think of what they have meant and do mean to each of us and perhaps also a day for mothers and grandmothers, aunts and godmothers to be treated and to know how valued they are: for many this year linking up via Zoom or facetime.

Connecting God's relationship with people and valuing motherhood is something we are made aware of in the Bible, especially in the Psalms: "For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth. Upon you I have leaned from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God." *Psalm 71:5-6.* "On you I was cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me, you have been my God." *Psalm 22:10.*

A couple of years ago I baptised a baby whose mother was a midwife. The words of the opening prayer of thanksgiving seemed particularly appropriate. "Creator God we thank you for the wonder of new life and for the mystery of human love. We give you thanks for all whose support and skill surround and sustain the beginning of life. As Jesus knew love within a family may this child grow in strength and wisdom and give to these parents your sustaining grace and love. Amen."

Our first reading today reminded us of the safe and loving home that Moses' sister cleverly found for him when he was in danger. In the first chapter of Exodus, we read of two other women, Shiphrah and Puah, who by their quick thinking ensure the safe delivery of the baby boys from the murderous orders of Pharaoh.

The wisdom of Shiphrah and Puah and the loving nurturing of the baby found in the bulrushes might be called an act of sisterhood or girl power.

A number of women leaders of nations today are recognised for their wise spontaneity, some in relation to decisions they have made during the pandemic. This week is the second anniversary of the attack on the mosque in Christchurch. Jacinda Ardern, the young New Zealand Prime Minister seemed that day to spontaneously both say and do what was most needed.

She said this “The world has been stuck in a vicious cycle of extremism and it must end. We cannot confront these issues alone, none of us can... The answer lies in our humanity. We each hold the power, in our words, in our actions, in our daily acts of kindness... Let that be the legacy of 15th of March... We have a responsibility to be the place that we wish to be. A place that is diverse, that is welcoming, that is kind and compassionate. Those are the values that represent the very best of us.”

The name Moses was given because he was taken from the water, but this was just the beginning. There follow his adult encounters with Pharaoh, the Passover, the long journey through the wilderness, the giving of the law, the coming to Canaan. At the burning bush there is a deep consideration about the very nature of God as Yahweh, and the name Moses also coming to mean “Born of a certain God”.

The one God, the God beyond, the God who moves towards us in a way that brings forth life, the wellspring of life, a creativity that seeks to find expression in human creativity, to enable and empower fulness of life for all.

The God who is understood through wisdom: wisdom to be observed when recognising the variety and complexity of the living world, wisdom spoken in the words of the prophets who continued to speak up for God even when no-one listened, the wisdom of the rabbis who interpreted the ways of God to the people and the wisdom of Jesus, his teaching, his pattern of living and what we have come to understand that his suffering, his sacrifice and his dying and rising from the dead mean.

Wisdom that St Paul wrote of as leading men, women and children to act courageously clothed with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience and most of all with love which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Wisdom we celebrate today as that passed on by mothers and exemplified by those whose spontaneous actions are recorded in the book of Exodus as saving the life of one child. His later encounter with God in a burning bush and on a mountain transforms our understanding of God and this was central to how Jesus taught and lived, so enabling God’s ways to be shown that God’s will may be done.