

Sunday 19 March 2023

Mothering Sunday

(and Fourth Sunday of Lent)



Sermon © Revd Robin Wilding.

Prayers of intercession © Paul Monk.

Liturgy © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns please click on the links.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,
<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 Tell out my soul

(please click on this link to hear the hymn)

The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

The Preparation

**All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Listen to God’s commandment:

‘Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long.’

Today, we remember how we often fail to give enough respect or attention to those we love, and confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name. Amen.

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

It is usual to omit the Gloria during Lent.

The Collect for Mothering Sunday (and Fourth Sunday of Lent)

God of compassion,
whose Son Jesus Christ, the child of Mary,
shared the life of a home in Nazareth,
and on the cross drew the whole human family to himself:
strengthen us in our daily living
that in joy and in sorrow
we may know the power of your presence
to bind together and to heal;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the Second Book of Moses called Exodus

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.'

Exodus 2:1-10

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Colossians

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 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. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. 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. 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.

Colossians 3:12-17

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 [Morning has broken](#)[\(please click here to hear the hymn\)](#)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

All Glory to you O Lord.

Jesus' father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. 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 so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

Luke 2:33-35

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

Lent is intended not as some health kick (giving up chocolate or whatever) or even some sackcloth and ashes holiness push. Instead it is a time to reflect and prepare ourselves for the heart and the centre of our salvation—the terrible awfulness of Good Friday and our Saviour's self-giving and the glorious wonder and victory of Easter Sunday as he is Risen Indeed.

Mothering Sunday in its ancient origins celebrates primarily the church and secondly the significant women of the Bible and in our lives.

The Lord's Prayer starts with a real shock—that our familiarity with it misses. Jesus tells us to address God as Father. This is revolutionary for his day—seen as wrongly familiar and disrespectful and even blasphemous. Yet this is the heart of God—adopting us as his children.

God has a priority for families—his planned nation Israel at its individual level gave each family a gift of land that was theirs in perpetuity—quite a gift in an agricultural society. The Genesis stories are about one family's generational journey of faith, which involves a lot of messiness! Ruth gives us a relevant story about aliens and strangers becoming part of the people: it's good to have it there in scripture with all the kerfuffle over the desperate asylum seekers this last fortnight.

And in so many of the Old Testament stories significant women appear, Rachel, Rebecca, Naomi, Esther (who saves her people from destruction), Deborah who rules Israel as Judge—and the significant men around her who won't go anywhere without her presence. But also Jezebel whose power and evil intent broke even such a man as the prophet Elijah. On the personal level, Proverbs 31 celebrates the vital part women played in the economic life of a farming family (the partnership of a

marriage) while Song of Songs celebrates romantic love with the voice of a woman.

And God uses throughout the sad story of the decline of Israel the metaphor of marriage breakdown. And in the New Testament we are invited to the marriage supper of the Messiah, the church is seen as the Bride of Christ, the nature of our belonging to God is couched in such emotional and committed ways.

Let's celebrate our mother and families, let's celebrate our church life, and let us wonder at our God who loves us so much and is committed to us for eternity. And think on how far he was willing to go to win us.

Let's finish a bit light heartedly. I failed to mention in the list of women earlier Sarah the wife of Abraham who tries hard to sort God's plans out for him (the story of Hagar and Ishmael) and ends up laughing at the preposterous, the ridiculous actions of God—how ridiculous to bear a child in old age. And who became the mother of the Nation. I love it that it all started in that outburst of giggles.

The Church of Scotland has a lovely prayer that I think fits with Lent and our thoughts this morning. Let's finish with it:

I have had enough
of sad saints
and sour religion
I have had enough
of sin spotting
and grace doubting
I need some laughter, Lord:
the kind you planted in Sarah

But please may I not have to wait
until I am ninety
and pregnant!

The blessing of flowers

All beauty reflects the beauty of God,
and points toward God in the beauty of his holiness.

Let us pray:

Loving Heavenly Father, creator of heaven and earth,
thank you for these flowers that you have made.

We ask that they may be channels of your love,
and that they may impart joy to those who receive them.

Bless and hallow these flowers,
that their fragrance and beauty may direct the faithful to you,
in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All Amen.

Flowers are distributed.

The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
the source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

Today, we thank God for all those born of a mother around the world.

The prophet Isaiah wrote that God is our mother, and that God comforts us and carries us in her arms. We thank you for all that was good from our own mothers, and for their care and love. We also pray for those who no longer have an earthly mother or never knew their mothers; and we pray for those who find being a mother is difficult or unwanted, or whose experiences of having a mother was difficult.

Short pause

Lord in your mercy.

All Hear our prayer.

We pray for Mother Church. In the Gospels, Jesus spoke of himself as a mother, longing to wrap his arms around us like a mother-hen gathering her chicks under

her wings. We therefore pray for the Church, asking You to inspire it to embrace us and teach it how to love us.

Short pause

Lord in your mercy.

All Hear our prayer.

We pray for the world. In the Psalms, King David wrote that in God's presence, he felt quiet and at peace, trusting in God like a child safe in its mother's arms. We pray for all those in the world who do not feel safe, or are in danger and need, pain and distress.

Short pause

Lord in your mercy.

All Hear our prayer.

We pray for ourselves and those we know who are in need. The prophet Isaiah said that God will never forget us and that he knows each of us just as an earthly mother knows her own children. We therefore pray for ...

Short pause

Lord in your mercy.

All Hear our prayer.

As he hung dying on a cross, Jesus died he prayed for his mother and sought to look after her. We pray for all those who have died: those who died last night; those who died alone; and those whose funerals occur soon. We pray for the souls of ...

Short pause

Lord in your mercy.

All Hear our prayer.

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

The peace

Through the prophet Isaiah, God says,
'As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you.'

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 Mary, Mother of our Lord (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below:

The Dismissal

May God, who gave birth to all creation, bless us:

may God, who became incarnate by an earthly mother, bless us:

may God, who broods as a mother over her children, bless us.

and the blessing of God the Almighty:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 Great is thy faithfulness (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ.

Amen.

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

Father, you made the world and love your creation.
You gave your Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour.
His dying and rising have set us free from sin and death.
And so we gladly thank you,
with saints and angels praising you, and saying,

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

All **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 for ever. Amen.

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

All **Though we are many, we are one body,**
because we all share in one bread.

All **Lamb of God,**
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us.
Amen.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

Loving God,
as a mother feeds her children at the breast
you feed us in this sacrament with the food and drink of eternal life:
help us who have tasted your goodness
to grow in grace within the household of faith;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen

All Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.