

Sunday 3 March 2024

Mothering Sunday

(and Fourth Sunday of Lent)



Sermon © Pete Haslam.

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Prayers of intercession © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

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 **Morning has broken**

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

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

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 Second 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 [Jesus, name above all names](#) (click on this link 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

In celebration of Mother's Day, I'd like to focus on the relationship between Jesus and his mother, Mary. I think you'll agree Mary exemplifies virtues common to mothers of every age; more importantly, Mary gives us a glimpse of this mysterious, marvellous, and challenging role we call 'motherhood'. What we know about Mary, the mother of Jesus, is found in several brief glimpses of text. The first is from Luke's gospel. It comes months before Jesus was born. According to Luke, the angel Gabriel visited Mary and told her that God had found favour with her and that she was to bear a son and call him Jesus. Mary reacted as you might expect. She exclaimed,

'How can this be, seeing I am a virgin?'

The angel answered her, 'The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

Therefore also the holy one who is born from you will be called the Son of God ...'

So long before Jesus ever took his first breath, and long before she had any idea what was in store for her, Mary began preparing a place for him in her heart.

What's it like to have new life come into being within your body? Some of us will never know. As a man, I can only marvel at what a woman must experience as she feels the baby come to life in her womb, drawing its strength from her very own life's blood. Many of us will never have that experience, yet all of us came to life in just that way. What we do well to remember is that, just as our bodies were being nourished in the waters of the womb, so also were our souls being nurtured by the loving thoughts and prayers of our mothers. When it's all said and done, that's what mothers do best. The next glimpse comes twelve years later. It's also found in Luke's gospel. Jesus and his family had made the long pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. They travelled in a large group or caravan with friends and family. When they got there, the city was crowded. When they got ready to go home, Jesus was busy making mischief with the other boys ... or so they thought.

They travelled all day, but when they set up camp for the night, Jesus was nowhere to be found. According to Luke, Mary and Joseph travelled a full day's journey before they realised Jesus was missing. When they got back to Jerusalem, they found him in the Temple talking with the elders. They breathed a sigh of relief, and then Mary did what any mother would have done: She hugged her son and kissed him—and then gave him a proper scolding! She screamed, 'Son, why have you treated us this way? Behold, your father and I were anxiously looking for you.' Frankly, I've never understood this capacity mothers have to reassure and reprimand their children in the same breath. I tell you, there are contradictory forces at work here! But, for a mother they go hand-in-hand: she wants to expose her children to the possibilities of the world while, at the same time, protect them from its dangers. I don't quite know how to explain it other than saying mothers are like that.

Mary appears next in Jesus' life at the scene of his first miracle. As John tells the story, the wine failed, and the party was about to come to a screeching halt when Mary stepped in. 'Don't just stand there, do something!' she said to Jesus. And he said, '*mother!*' (John 2:3-4)

OK, so that's not a strict translation, but you get the point: Jesus did not want to get involved. He didn't think it wasn't any of their business; besides, he said, 'My hour has not yet come.' But Mary insisted. So, Jesus told the stewards to fill the purification jars to the brim, and then he transformed the water into the most robust, sparkling wine you've ever tasted. It's fair to say that, up to this point, no one knew he had the power ... except his mother. She knew what her son was capable of, perhaps better than he knew himself, and when the time was ripe, she provoked him to act in order to unleash the potential within. One of the most difficult moments for Mary comes later. It was when she got wind of the gossip going around that her son was acting irrationally. His friends thought he was possessed

by a demon. They sought to reason with him, but when it became obvious that he wouldn't listen, they sent for his mother and brothers to come and take him back to Nazareth. According to Mark, Jesus was in a house teaching when he got word that his mother and brothers were outside. Here's what he said: "who are my mother and my brothers?" Looking around at those who sat around him, he said,

Behold, my mother and my brothers!

For whoever does the will of God, the same is my brother,
and my sister, and mother.'

Just so we're clear, Jesus didn't say that Mary wasn't his mother. Instead, he pointed to a bigger picture. The family circle includes all who belong to God – brothers and sisters through faith. He didn't deny his relationship to his mother, but he did set the limits of her authority. He made it clear he was accountable only to God. It was up to Mary to step aside. This is one of the hardest things any mother has to do: Relinquish control; let the child make his/her decisions, make his/her own mistakes; entrust the child to the world—which is to say, to God – and be brave enough not to stand in the way. Finally Jesus' relationship with Mary comes on the hill of Golgotha. Mary was there, of course, standing at the foot of the cross. You can imagine the anguish she felt watching the suffering and death of her son, unable to lift a finger to help him. Standing beside her was his beloved disciple, John. In his last moments, Jesus called to her and said, 'Woman, behold your son.' Then he called to John and said, 'Behold, your mother!' (John 19:26–27). It was his final act of devotion, to entrust the care of his mother to his closest friend. He knew that John would provide for her and protect her in his absence. In turn, Mary would become as a mother to John.

Now—even in today's world—I know that even though Mother's Day is so good and so important and so wonderful for so many mums, for other mums who share Mary's pain it can be a day of heartbreak. It is a day of deep pain with deep wounds associated with it. Mother's Day is great if your mother is alive and you have had a great relationship with her. For some of us here today your mothers are no longer alive. Or maybe your relationships you had were a bit strained. For those whom this is prevalent Mother's Day is not necessarily a day of joy. It is a day of heartbreak and bitterness and in some sense it could be anger.

Then there are other women out there whose longest desire was to be a mother but for whatever reason it just didn't work out. They were unable to have children of their own. What they are experiencing is a different sort of grief. They are feeling a grief over something that will never be. Mother's Day can be really sad for a woman like that. Then you have maybe some of the older mums out here who have

maybe lost contact with their children or their children disowned them or they are incarcerated or whatever it is. They don't have that contact with their children. Then there are the single mums out there; and the ones that are struggling and balancing trying to be a single mum and a dad at the same time and ready to pull their hair out.

Of course, you have all sorts of other situations that speak of, maybe someone who has just become pregnant and is anticipating their pregnancy with a little bit of fear that they might not be able to handle being a mother I want to address all of us here today. Especially those who may have a phenomenal relationship with their mother. Also the women who know how to nurture people. I would put the challenge out there that you have to learn to take your nurturing abilities outside your biological family and extend it out into the spiritual kingdom of God.

You need to be able to go out there and realise that in this church and in this entire community there are a lot of women with a deep, hole in their heart. Because they lost a mother through death, maybe possibly at a young age. Or maybe they never had any sort of connection with their mom. They have this deep hole that only God can fill, and he is going to fill it through other women that come along and are able to share Gods love and understanding with them then there are those out there that just need to come alongside our teenagers. They just need somebody to listen to them, to hear them, and to allow them to just help process this whole thing. Then you have the women who wanted to be mothers but for whatever reason it wasn't going to happen.

Then you have the elderly women out there who actually are looking for a daughter. Maybe they have been away from their kids or the kids disown them or the kids might be deceased. They need daughters to come along and spend time with them and to listen to them and to visit with them so that their golden years will not be so lonely. Mother's Day is a day of celebration, but it is also a day, for many, of tears. It is a day that you would honour your mother, but it is also a day that for some of us it is okay to experience regret for maybe what will never be. But through Jesus Christ, we always know it is a day of hope. we know that what people are missing in their biological family can be given to them through our spiritual family, especially those women who are in Christ.

Amen.

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.**

The blessing of flowers for Mothering Sunday

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.

Prayers of intercession

We pray to God our mother:

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.

And we 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.

Lord in your mercy.

All Hear our prayer.

We pray for Mother Church. In the Gospels, Jesus spoke of himself as being like 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.

Lord in your mercy.

All Hear our prayer.

We pray for the world. In the Psalms, 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.

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 ...

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 ...

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 The Lord's my shepherd (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 Shine, Jesus, shine (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.