

Sunday March 22nd Mothering Sunday

The YouTube links will allow you to enjoy the hymns and sing along even if you are alone.

Order of Service

Call to Worship

Hymn 57 (Singing the Faith) 10 (H&P) Let all the world in every corner sing
<https://youtu.be/PfXldoDnvq4>

Prayers.

Loving God, it is always good to be in your presence.
Even though we may be alone at home
We rejoice that we can pray with friends;
Pray with family;
Pray with those not known to us.
That through your spirit we are made one and can rejoice in your presence.

On this day we want to thank and praise you for your love.
That you love us as profoundly as mothers love their children.
That you remind us that we are special.
That you always have time and a place
For us who you call your children.

We thank you for the warming image of Christ holding his people
As the mother chicken wraps her wings around her chicks.
We thank you that we are given your love
Even if we feel unworthy and undeserving.

Lord we admit that we do not know why you should love us,
We are grateful that you do.
We know we do things, say things, think things that we regret.
We know there are many actions we would like to change
Many words we would like to withdraw.

We are sorry for our faults and our failings.
Thank you for your love, and your grace.
Thank you that you tell us our sins are forgiven.
Thank you that we have new hope and new life.

We ask that you will bless us with your presence
We ask that you will bless us with your peace
We ask that you will bring hope and encouragement
We ask that your spirit will indeed make us one even though we are in many different places. Amen.

Hymn 481 (Singing the Faith) 1008 (CMP) The Lord's my Shepherd
<https://youtu.be/-eIQQayhpak>

Bible Reading

Exodus 2:1-10

Birth and Youth of Moses

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.'

Pause for thought 1.

Our grandchildren are young, tiny and very precious. At eight months and 8 weeks we see changes and development every day; already we are forgetting how much smaller and frailer they were when they were newly born.

Whenever we see grandchildren, children or even just a baby in the street we know the feelings of wanting to care, protect and nurture them. I wonder how Moses' mum could let him go. If she kept him then her child would be killed as he was too big to hide. What sense of despair leads anyone to let their child take a chance in a basket, on a river?

Is it something you could do? I'm not sure I could.

Faith or Foolishness?

Because the story of Moses is being told then we know that the action that looks foolish was an expression of the deepest faith. God brought blessing out of a situation that could have been the worst.

If we were reporting this situation today we would be talking about the genocide of the Jewish people. We would be reporting the harrowing despair of mothers sending their babies out into uncertainty; faith or foolishness. We don't know any other stories or have other accounts of mothers in desperate times looking to save their babies; what we do see in this story is faith.

God brought blessing, even to reuniting Moses and his mother. God brought transformation for Moses and opportunity for Moses. God ultimately brought freedom and justice for an entire people.

Faith or foolishness. Reflect on a time when you have done something in faith which others said was foolish. If you are able share the story with someone and listen to them tell their story.

Hymn 536 (Singing the Faith) 225 (CMP) He's got the whole world in his hand
<https://youtu.be/lXtFqCw6rH8>

Bible Reading

John 19:25-27

And that is what the soldiers did.

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

Pause for thought 2.

Blood is thicker than water. A familiar saying and one which we use to say family matters more than friends.

I find it amazing that Jesus on the cross was able to look beyond his own pain and suffering and see his mother, and he made provision for her even when things were so dire. Surely blood is thicker than water.

Yet what I find even more surprising is that Jesus provided for his mother by the creation of a new family. He didn't turn to James his brother to care for Mary, he turned to John to care for Mary and created a new family in doing so.

Whether this was intentional or not Jesus has given hope and encouragement to many for whom family isn't the safe haven we would like it to be. For many family means threat, and hurt, and pain and secrets and abuse. To be told blood is thicker than water for those people is to trap and exclude. When father means abuser; when brother or sister means bully; when mother means neglect family isn't a place of nurture or support it is a nightmare and a place of destruction.

Jesus creates a new community, a new family, which has nothing to do with blood relationship but everything to do with relationships rooted in faith in God, rooted in love and above all choice. When Jesus created a new family of faith for Mary and John he opened up a new way for people to find affirmation, love and a place to grow.

When our experience of family is hard and difficult we may never feel comfortable using family terms to talk about our relationship with God. But our relationship with God, and our

relationships with those who share our faith, gives us experience of support and affirmation, places where we are affirmed and valued.

Jesus made many things new, he has made a new way of seeing god, he has brought the promise of a new heaven and new earth. He has made a new family – our family of faith and opened a way for everyone to know they are loved, affirmed and valued.

Think of a time when your relationship with God made you feel special. Thank God for the experience. Ask yourself if there is anything you could do to help someone else feel special?

Hymn 594 (Singing the Faith) 617 (H&P) Lord Jesus Christ
https://youtu.be/QA_g98O42Q4

Prayer of Intercession:

We remember those caught up in the coronavirus pandemic.

Those whose lives have become restricted...

Those who are severely ill...

Those who have died and those in mourning...

Those seeking to manage the outbreak...

Those working for a cure...

We remember families and particularly mothers today.

Those mothers who we miss, even after many years...

Those families that have experienced pain and brokenness...

Those whose experience of family is not good news...

Those who long for a family but have nowhere to go...

We pray for the Church that it may be a place of 'good' family experience.

We pray for friends and loved ones.

We pray that those most at risk may find support and help.

Silence

Say aloud the Lord's Prayer.

Hymn 186 (Singing the Faith) 86 (H&P) Tell out my soul the greatness of the lord
<https://youtu.be/qf3mgRUZkAk>

Blessing

Go in peace, may the love of God surround us and uphold us, bringing courage and hope as we serve the living God. Amen