

Mothering Sunday 2025

“Mother is the name for God, on the lips and hearts of all children” – this is a line from one of my favourite films, and is a good idea to have in mind on this of all the Sundays in the year. Mothering Sunday has its own distinctive theme, but how might we think of mothers and mothering on this day? For those of us who are lucky enough to have had a good relationship with our mothers, mother’s day is a happy and joyful time in which we can spend time with the mother who shaped who we would eventually grow up to be. For those who have had a difficult relationship with their mothers, or for those who have recently been bereaved of their mothers then this may indeed be a difficult day to live through. But my hope for you all is that today is indeed a joyful day.

Everyone here has been given a mother – we wouldn’t be here without them. So important are mothers to the way of the world that Jesus himself, when he came down from heaven to be incarnate in his world came through a mother, Mary. Today isn’t just a nice day to give your mother some flowers and a card, but there are some important lessons that mother’s day teaches us, lessons of truthfulness, of care and protection, of support, and of bearing burdens together.

Many mothers always tell the truth; in a loving way they don’t sugar coat the realities of the world, and tell us if what we’re doing doesn’t match the world’s expectations or if it puts us in danger – “You’re not going out dressed like that!”, or “well, that could have gone better” are things that I’m sure many of us can remember being told when we were younger. Similarly, when there are times when we need to learn a lesson, then our mothers are usually not backward in coming forward. Mothers are courageous in telling us the harsh truths, even though they know that we might not like it at the time, but that it will be better for us in the long run.

Churches can sometimes be like children, afraid of facing the truths of the world but in need of hearing them. One lesson we can learn from mothers is to be courageous in telling the truth in difficult situations. One example might be a difficult church council or PCC meeting, where hard truths need to be said, in love, and out of a desire for the continued good of all. I don’t mean we should look for trouble or seek to cause arguments, but if the situation truly calls for it, then let us be strong in proclaiming the truth.

Although they might not sugar coat the realities of the world, mothers do seek to shield their children from the harshest that the world has to offer – there is loving care in the way that they bring up their children, and many mothers have to go to some personal sacrifice for their children’s wellbeing. In our churches we all need looking after, no matter who we are; new to the church, experienced, old or young, minister or lay. Mothers can also support their children, first in their faltering steps, then on the first day of school, then with homework. As we get older then there will be driving lessons and university and all kinds of other things that our mothers can and often do support us in doing. Throughout our lives, our mothers are often there to lend support. Part of our calling as people of fellowship is to care for and support one another. I know that that happens to a good level in this church, and so I hope this will encourage you to continue.

Mothers also bear pain. One of the gospel readings set for Mothering Sunday is very short – only three verses long (Luke 2:33-35). However, they are a very powerful three verses in which Mary is told of the sorrow that she will have to bear because of her son, and, especially as we journey towards Easter, we know that this will be because of Jesus’ crucifixion. This teaches us not only that God shares our sufferings, but that we should bear one another’s sufferings as well. This is no easy thing to do; often people ask why such bad things happen if we have an all-powerful God. I usually

don't have the heart to tell people that this isn't the way to think about God. Ours isn't a God who intervenes to make everything OK, like some magician in the sky with a magic wand. Instead, He is a God who is with us in the difficult times, right by our side and going through it all with us, not out of any lack of power or compassion, but out of love, out of a desire to be by our side no matter what. A desire to feel our pain and sorrow and stick with us through it all. A church should be known as a place where we journey with one another through the good times and the bad, who remain by one another's side through the pain and sorrow of life. In this way, the church can truly be called "Mother Church".

While we are here in this life, given one another to care for, may we learn the lessons of mothers, those of mutual love and support and shared sufferings.

Amen.