

Can you imagine what Mary was feeling ~ what any of the women or close companions of Jesus were experiencing as they watched him die. We know that despite the trauma Jesus concern was about lovingly caring for others. Mothering characteristics. Characteristics that do not depend on being an actual mother, characteristics that show in each one of us as gifts from God in whatever measure He blesses us with and gifts we are given for sharing in our everyday living.

So today, as far as the church is concerned is about the mothering characteristics of our nature that should be nurtured and treasured, that the church, hopefully helps us to recognise and they are what we celebrate and give thanks for today ~ this Mothering Sunday ~ not as the world would promote ~ Mother's Day ~ our mother's role is to assist us in our awareness' of those mothering characteristics and our responsibility is to respect and imitate those, not just for today but everyday.

We share flowers this morning ~ not just for the women in church but for every person here as we give thanks for our ability to mother, to feel, to hurt, to care, to want to bring about peace ~ to want to show love and as we know Jesus ~ make Him known !

Happy Mothering Sunday.

Amen.



Ministry Musings (26th March 2017)

What a great day this is to be
knowing Jesus ~ making Him known !

HAPPY MOTHERING SUNDAY



I remember my parents telling me gently but firmly two things about today

- 1) Not to waste my money on flowers or a card when all the prices would be increased and the flowers 'forced' to be ready ~ so they wouldn't last. It was explained that if I could not show Mum how important she was all year round then I needn't bother for one Sunday a year to make myself feel good! That might sound harsh but at the time as we lived above the Newsagents that Dad managed so we all knew there was a 300% mark-up on special occasion cards and it upset Dad that we bought in bunches of daffs from the local farm to sell as a Mother's Day special! (I was being taught to Dethrone Mammon!)
- 2) Today is not 'Mother's Day' if we celebrate it properly it is Mothering Sunday, where the church gives thanks for all the 'mothering' characteristics we see in each other, regardless of gender, and we take time to thank each other for the gifts God gives us that make us who we are. We do that by recognising the obedience and grace of the Mother of God, God's love experienced in Jesus Christ from whom we take the example for the way we live and the churches role to shelter and nurture but, importantly like the church helps us to live a Christ-like way 24/7. So today is a reminder that we should recognise God in each other and thank and encourage each other in some small way every day.

To this day I never buy a card that declares 'Happy Mothers Day', even if I have to make one, it has to celebrate Mothering Sunday ~ and not be 'sloppy' about how my mum is the greatest! ~ Wonderfully she is the greatest Mum for me ~ but today is not just about her but about all God's children and how together we are the family of God.

So for us Mothering Sunday meant church and then something that was family time (extended if possible and including neighbours who would otherwise be alone or isolated) ~ often 'high tea' with some time to be creative and share each other's gifts; to recognise we all inherit 'mothering' attributes in our character and need to recognise them. At Immanuel we share flowers ~ everyone gets them ~ and we take them for a neighbour to thank them for their mothering nature ~ however that is expressed.

1 Samuel 1: 20 - end OT page 252
2 Corinthians 1: 3-7 NT page 175
John 19: 25b -27 NT page 111

This week has seen atrocities in Westminster. Actions that have caused death and maiming ~ unnecessary, and I want to say mindless ~but there was a mind behind them ~ they had been well thought through by the man who acted in such a devastating and destructive way! A man, who has a mother, though his actions did not show any mothering characteristics and she cannot be held in any way responsible for her sons behaviour. You can't help wondering how she feels this morning ~ how she has felt every time that young man had served time in prison or she had heard had been violent. How she felt when he changed his name and his personality changed gradually, so that she no longer recognised who he was"

We cannot easily put ourselves in that woman's' place but we can probably understand that if those around her today are celebrating Mother's Day ~ the commercial pampering and treating of any woman who has been able to have a child ~ she could be experiencing sadness, loneliness, even the feelings of failure ~ none of which she deserves to feel but the emotions are there because of the cruelty of the material world.

Archbishop Justin talks about "What we receive we treat as ours"~ and reflects on the links between power and money; how we come to think that whatever we have gained we have by our own efforts rather than through the grace of God and as a result we develop a wrong attitude and cling to the 'power' that our gains ~ our possessions give us. The problem is that the power is often not a reality. It might be if you are a Paul Getty or Donald Trump ~ but look at the diversity of those two individuals ~ both clinging to what they achieve but both completely Different!

The world tends to treat motherhood as a power ~ given to selected women, regardless of status or aptitude but denied to everyone else ~ and the mammon that needs dethroning today is the injustice in that misplacing of power. Those who have children should be honoured every day ~ not just one Sunday in the year ~ their task demands much of them ~ a calling or a sacrifice. Look at Hannah ~ she was one of the two wives of Elkanah, the other was Peninnah and she fit into the cultural expectations of the day ~ she had children whereas

Hannah had none. Elkanah was not worried by this he loved Hannah and gave her a double portion to show his love ~ but his love was marred by Peninnah's provoking of Hannah ~ she effectively bullied her and because she had failed to meet worldly expectation and remained barren. Hannah took her heartache to the Lord and was misunderstood even by Eli the priest who rebuked her for being drunk. When he spoke with her he realised her deep faith and bid her go in peace and God grant her desire. Hannah wanted a child ~ but not to keep and possess ~ she wanted a child to confirm her womanhood ~ because the world places an exaggerated importance on the ability to have children rather than the skills it takes to care for them! How did Hannah take care of Samuel? She kept the promise that she had made the Lord and once the child was weaned she gave Him back to God to serve in the Temple ~ she knew that her child was not her possession but God's creation and she gave him back to God. Samuel was a small child ~ he had not had the time to 'go bad' ~ to be influenced by the greed and selfishness in the world ~ and the responsibility for how he turned out was given to Eli the priest. Hannah was a good mother ~ she did what she thought best for her child but she probably does not fit your perception of what a mother should be! The world would see her as abandoning and irresponsible ~ think about it!

Paul writes to the Corinthian church that we should give our praise to the God of all comfort; to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort ~ why so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort that we receive from God. What comfort could you offer the mother of this week's terrorist if she were to be here this morning? What you could offer would depend on how you perceive motherhood and terrorism ~ how you apportion power and what you cling to as values. Whatever we managed to say or do ~ how we were able to be would reflect our understanding of God's love for us and all of His creation ~ His mothering of us ~ that unconditional love that remains despite the circumstance. God stood close as we killed His Son in worldly, human terms but His love overcame death and he loves you and I ~ and that is comfort!

We are told that near to the cross of our Lord stood His mother, her sister, Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene. The Disciple Jesus loved was also close by and Jesus ensures his mother's well being into John's care.