

SUNDAY 22nd MARCH 2020
MOTHERING SUNDAY

COLLECT FOR MOTHERING SUNDAY

God of love,
passionate and strong,
tender and careful:
watch over us and hold us
all the days of our life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The Word of God

1 Samuel 1: 20 - 28

So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel saying, "Because I asked the Lord for him."

When her husband Elkanah went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the Lord and to fulfil his vow, Hannah did not go. She said to her husband, "After the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the Lord, and he will live there always."

"Do what seems best to you," her husband Elkanah told her. "Stay here until you have weaned him; only may the Lord make good his word." So the woman stayed at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull,^[d] an Ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. When the bull had been sacrificed, they brought the boy to Eli, and she said to him, "Pardon me, my lord. As surely as you live, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord." And he worshiped the Lord there.

Colossians 3: 12 - 17

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Gospel

John 19: 25b - 27

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman,^[a] here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home

BECOMING FAMILY

Elkanah says to Hannah in our Reading from 1 Samuel 'do what seems best to you'. Many new situations and challenges have been faced this week with lots of people 'doing what seems best' as we each navigate through a life changing week.

‘Doing what seems best’ has resulted in many acts of love as people have done exactly what Paul writes in our reading from Colossians ‘clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.’ This is true in our communities as neighbours, friends and strangers have supported one another. It is perhaps most true for our wonderful NHS whose staff are working tirelessly at this time and who we hold in our thoughts and prayers.

On this Mothering Sunday our gospel reading speaks of people who are not related becoming family. Jesus says from the cross to his own mother and a beloved disciple “Woman, here is your son,” and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” That is exactly what we have seen this week as strangers, neighbours and friends have been given to one another and true ‘family’ bonds have been forged through acts of love and service.

THE CHURCH OF OUR HOMES

These three phrases struck me from today’s readings:

...And he worshiped the Lord there

Today we are beginning to worship in our homes on Sundays. This may feel strange and unsettling but may also feel exciting and full of potential. How do you feel today as you worship?

...Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

The things we do in worship - read the bible, reflect on it and what it says to us today, sing songs - will be done differently and so we will see these elements of prayer and worship afresh. How will you read the bible and reflect on it today? Will you sing or read a psalm? What other elements of a service in a church building will you miss or see how you can incorporate into your time of prayer? e.g. lighting a candle, having a cross with you, times of sitting or standing...

...From that time on, this disciple took her into his home

Even though it might be strange to us particularly today we are not doing anything that hasn’t been done before. It was in ordinary homes that the early church began, it was in our childhood homes with those who mothered us that we learnt some of the most important habits of life and faith. Can you think of where your faith has been nurtured, shaped, challenged by life in your home?

...A suggestion

One way we might enhance and develop our domestic churches is to each set up a prayer space or corner and over the next few weeks work on developing our own rhythm of prayer across the day. Establishing a specific space and rhythm of prayer will be really helpful during this time of increased physical isolation, giving order and purpose to the day. You might want to adopt the ancient practice of dividing the day into blocks of three hours punctuated by short times of prayer or perhaps pray twice a day at sunrise and sunset. Starting and ending the day with God.

Peace and good wishes.... Andrew