



Chet Valley Churches

All Together Worship



Mothering Sunday

14th March 2021

All Together Worship: Mothering Sunday

It is all but a year since we started worshipping from our own homes when we've been unable to be together in our church buildings. Though we remain geographically isolated let us gather together in spirit.

Today some of the material we are using in our worship has been produced by the Mother's Union.

Introduction

On Mothering Sunday many of us thank God for the women who have had the greatest impact on our lives, and celebrate their unconditional love and sacrifice.

For others, however, Mothering Sunday brings mixed emotions, and it can take real tenacity and trust in the Holy Spirit to give love and to feel loved.

So in this service, we remember before God families of all kinds, as they navigate the joys and challenges of family life, and ask for his blessing on them.

We Prepare for Worship

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us,
that we should be called children of God!

1 John 3:1

We draw near in worship to our heavenly Father,
with full and thankful hearts,

**that we belong to his family
and are all equally loved by him. Amen.**

♪ Hymn: *Jesus Good Above All Other*

**Jesus, good above all other,
Gentle child of gentle mother,
In a stable born our brother,
Give us grace to persevere.**

**Jesus, cradled in a manger,
For us facing every danger,
Living as a homeless stranger,
Make we thee our king most dear.**



**Jesus, for thy people dying,
Risen master, death defying,
Lord in heaven, thy grace supplying,
Keep us to thy presence near.**

**Jesus, who our sorrows bearest,
All our thoughts and hopes thou sharest,
Thou to men the truth declarest;
Help us all thy truth to hear.**

**Lord, in all our doings guide us;
Pride and hate shall ne'er divide us;
We'll go on with thee beside us,
And with joy we'll persevere!**

The Collect for Purity—A Prayer of Preparation

**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.**

The Collect—A Special Prayer for the Day

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.**

Confession—We Say Sorry to God

A minister introduces a time of penitence.

God loves all of us. He says, “as a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you;” But we often fail to love in return. So let us call to mind our sin, our failure to value the love of others and our failure to love as Christ has loved us.

**Father and Mother God,
we ask you to forgive us
for the things we have thought
and the things we have said
and the things that we have done
that do not please you.**



We are sorry.

**Help us to be more like Jesus:
ready to pray, ready to help others,
ready to do your will
in all things, every day. Amen.**

Absolution

May God who loved the world so much
that he sent his Son to be our Saviour
forgive *us* our sins
and make *us* holy to serve him in the world,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

📖 Old Testament: Exodus 2.1-10

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.'

After the Bible reading the reader may say

This is the word of the Lord: **Thanks be to God.**

♪ Hymn: He's Got the Whole World in His Hands

**He's got the whole world in his hands,
He's got the whole world in his hands,
He's got the whole world in his hands,
He's got the whole world in his hands.**

**He's got the earth and the sky in his hands,
He's got the night and the day in his hands,
He's got the sun and the moon in his hands,
He's got the whole world in his hands.**

He's got the whole world in his hands...

**He's got the little bittie baby in his hands,
He's got the little bittie baby in his hands,
He's got the little bittie baby in his hands,
He's got the whole world in his hands.**

He's got the whole world in his hands...

**He's got you and me, brother, in his hands,
He's got you and me, sister, in his hands,
He's got everybody in his hands,
He's got the whole world in his hands.**

He's got the whole wide world in his hands...

📖 The Gospel: John 19: 25b-27

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.
Glory to you, O Lord.

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.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Talk [Belinda Barwick]

There are several angles from which you can view this day, variously called Mothering Sunday or Mothers' Day: a celebration of motherhood, a time to thank our own mothers, a chance to think about the mothering nature of the church, an opportunity to think about the caring aspects of life.

Coming as it does in the early days of Spring, motherhood is happening all around us, with birds busy nest building, lambs and calves being born and mother earth herself awakening as the flowers open and the leaves unfurl.

Our readings today give us two points of view: the protective, nurturing, developing role that the mother generally takes in a family and the reverse, when the time comes for the child to protect the mother. The responsibility becomes two way.

Moses was born at a particularly perilous time for Jewish babies: the Jews are exiled in Egypt and have been doing a bit too well. The Pharaoh swings into action, announcing that all the male babies of the Hebrews are to be thrown into the Nile. Sadly, history has shown such horrible ways of asserting power time and time again. Moses' mother, desperate to save him, thinks of a way round this: she makes a little basket out of rushes, the strong fibrous rushes that were used for many other purposes in Egypt, and covers the outside with pitch, to make it watertight. The baby is placed in the basket and the basket, watched over by the baby's sister, is put into the reeds at the side of the river. You will remember that from Sunday school days, if you are of a certain generation, with a picture of the Egyptian princess dressed in rather formal gear for a bath in a river, bending over to look at the surprising addition to the river reeds.

Because lo and behold, the Pharaoh's daughter, coming to the river to bathe, finds the baby and is moved to save him—even though she knows this is a Hebrew boy child. Already we have two women ready to protect this baby—then comes a third, although she is a very young one: his sister Miriam (who would later be the first woman in the Bible to be named a prophetess) comes forward and offers her own mother as a wet nurse, to look after Moses until he is weaned. Three significant females who ensured that Moses was not only not killed as a baby but also that he was able to

rise to prominence and ultimately, of course, to lead the Hebrews out of slavery.

I have to say that today's readings show real girl power. The sort of power that has a huge effect on lives, but is not always visible. Moses' mother is put into a situation that requires both courage and ingenuity, if she is to avoid seeing her son killed. His sister uses a clever ploy to ensure that Moses will get the best possible early life care with his natural mother. The Pharaoh's daughter knows that she is breaking the rules in rescuing a boy child who is most definitely Hebrew, but seeing the helpless child floating in his little basket, she couldn't condemn him to death. Perhaps she knew there was a family connection with the girl who offered a wet nurse? Much better not to ask questions in this case!

One of the joys of this story is the subtlety with which the main protagonists work: there is nothing headline grabbing here of the 'Amazing Baby Survival!!' type. It happens quietly, but the history of God's people takes a new turn as a result.

The second reading is sobering: this child cannot be rescued by his mother. There is no one who can help him now, no miraculous princess to emerge to make everything alright after all. This time death is inevitable. Thirty or so years earlier Simeon had told Mary that a sword would pierce her soul, and here that prophecy is played out. I was in Assisi for Good Friday thirty years ago: one of the most moving moments of the evening procession came as the statue of Mary was carried past, blades piercing her breast, her head thrown back. For 364 days of the year it stands in the Duomo, the Cathedral, looking a little over the top, but it came into its own that evening, as the hushed crowds could see and feel her sorrow for themselves. The cost of loving is losing. That terrible time has come, the worst outcome for any parent: to see their child dying and to be able to do nothing.

Mary is standing at the foot of the cross with some of the other women. John, the beloved disciple is there too. They must have been in despair and desperately sad. Seeing them there Jesus commends them to each other, passing on his responsibilities as the son of a widowed mother. He entrusts the love that Mary had given him and received from him to a new son, ensuring that Mary will not be left destitute. Widows were amongst the most poor and vulnerable in the society of that time, so Jesus makes sure that Mary will be okay, with a family to care for her. The responsibility of

being the child of a loving parent is to look after that parent in return. Mary learned in the most painful way that the responsibility of the parent is to let the child go- even to his death, if that is what he needs to do.

I think most parents would say that letting their children go is one of the most difficult parts of their role. You see the same sort of thing sometimes when conservationists have been looking after an injured or very young animal, and the time comes to release it into the wild: a moment of joy, because the time of successful independence has been reached, but also of sadness, because that close relationship has to change.

As a reception teacher over many years I saw some very difficult partings for parents, mothers in particular—the first day at school, when in the worst cases children had to be peeled off their mums, or the school trip when mercifully the number of parents who insisted on coming onto the coach to kiss their children goodbye was very small. (We were going to be back by 2:30, but she still felt it keenly!) Or the first intimation that their small offspring had a mind of its own or was capable of being nasty—not something that is always easy to accept: it's all part of the letting go.

This is a day when things can get a bit sentimental—nothing wrong in that, but it is also a time when emotions can be quite raw, because not all mother/child relationships are perfect, the separations of the pandemic have been painful and our mothers may no longer be with us. So is there anything that all of us can get from today? I think there are many parallels between being a good mother and being a good Christian.

Think of that image that Jesus uses about Jerusalem 'how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings': if we are trying to follow his way then we are also called to take that same role. To be the people in society who are there to protect the most vulnerable, the ones who will think of the needs of other people as of equal if not greater value to our own. We are called to nurture each other, to show compassion to other people when they are falling and to face difficult situations courageously. To use forbearance in our relationships and to know when we have to let go and let others grow in faith.

Not every mother is perfect, and not every Christian is perfect either, but we have those enfolding wings with which we are protected and held safe in the darkest of times, the caring love which will not let us go into the unknown alone and the assurance that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus.

So let's celebrate mothering today, in all its aspects, giving thanks for those who have mothered us and for God, who, as Julian of Norwich said, "is our true Mother in whom we are endlessly carried and out of whom we will never come."

🎵 **Hymn: In Heavenly Love Abiding**

**In heavenly love abiding,
No change my heart shall fear;
And safe is such confiding,
For nothing changes here:
The storm may roar without me,
My heart may low be laid;
But God is round about me,
And can I be dismayed?**

**Wherever he may guide me,
No want shall turn me back;
My Shepherd is beside me,
And nothing can I lack:
His wisdom ever waketh,
His sight is never dim,
He knows the way he taketh,
And I will walk with him.**

**Green pastures are before me,
Which yet I have not seen;
Bright skies will soon be o'er me,
Where darker clouds have been;
My hope I cannot measure,
My path to life is free;
My Saviour has my treasure,
And he will walk with me.**



Creed: We Say What We Believe

The minister introduces the creed

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

We Pray Together

God of celebration, who rejoices with those who rejoice, we pray for those for whom Mothering Sunday is a time of thanksgiving and joy.
Mothering God, **hear our prayer.**

God of compassion, who weeps with those who weep, we pray for those for whom Mothering Sunday is a time of heartache and pain.
Mothering God, **hear our prayer.**

God of community, who calls the children to come to him, we thank you that your love abounds for families of every kind.
Mothering God, **hear our prayer.**

God of comfort who gathers us as a hen gathers its chicks, we thank you that your love surrounds the disappointed and hurt.
Mothering God, **hear our prayer.**

God of every circumstance, we bring our thanks and praise that we belong to your family as your beloved children.
Mothering God, **hear our prayer.**

We draw all our prayers together in the words that Jesus taught us.

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.**

Giving of Posies

The minister blesses the flowers

O God, bless these flowers, bless us and bless those who mother us. May the flowers remind us of how much they have done for us; may they remind those who care for us and for others how much we love them; and may they remind us all that God cares for us better than any mother ever could. **Amen.**



Watch out for a posy on your doorstep...

Hymn: Jesus Love is Very Wonderful

**Jesus' love is very wonderful,
Jesus' love is very wonderful,
Jesus' love is very wonderful,
Oh, wonderful love!**

**So high you can't get over it,
So low you can't get under it,
So wide you can't get round it,
Oh, wonderful love!**

Jesus' love is very wonderful...

**So deep you can't go through it,
So long you can't see the end of it,
So strong you can't resist it,
Oh, wonderful love!**

Jesus' love is very wonderful...

**So bright you have to see it,
So loud you have to hear it,
So sweet you have to taste it,
Oh, wonderful love!**



Blessing

May the love of the Father fill our hearts.

May the love of the Lord Jesus fill our homes.

May the grace of the Holy Spirit bind us together
in love in our families and our communities.

And may the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be upon us and those whom we love,
now and ever more. **Amen.**

The Dismissal

Peace be with you.

And also with you.

