

**Sunday 22nd March – Mothering Sunday**

**Revd Phil Cudmore (Curate)**

**Gospel Reading: Luke 2, verses 33 to 35**

The child's father and mother marvelled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

**Alternative Gospel reading John 19, verses 25 to 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, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

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Here we are already at the middle Sunday of Lent already, a time to take stock of our Lenten journey and also a time to remember our mothers as it is Mothering Sunday. A day that forms a gentle break and celebration in the midst of this time. A Sunday where nearly 400 years ago it was said that '...all the children and godchildren meet at the head and chief of the family and have a feast..' On their journey's to the feast as in later years with apprentices and servants having the day off to be with their mothers, they would gather flowers and make a posy to present – a "thank you" and a reminder in Spring flowers of God's beauty and abundance – and a tradition still maintained!

There is a choice of two gospel readings given, one from the very beginning of the gospel account of Jesus' life and the other from close to the end. The constant – Mary his mother. There at the beginning with all the anxiety and joy of his birth and the promises and predictions around it. Doing the right thing, taking Jesus to the temple, Something that would not have been easy for Joseph and Mary at that time. Accepting the word of God, both joyful and disturbing without challenge. Mary ever 'handmaid of the Lord.'

Then there at the crucifixion when Simeon's words must have echoed cruelly in her mind and Mary must surely have wanted to hide away from the unspeakable horror. But throughout, a love that never faltered, standing by her beloved son whatever happened. Living out of the love of God. The pattern love and obedience to God's will that Jesus saw growing up and was to display supremely himself. A pattern that he was able to demonstrate in caring for Mary in the midst of the agony of crucifixion – ensuring that she would be supported and cared for. Older age for widows in those days would have been bleak indeed without such support.

So here in these two short readings, we see the beauty and challenge of motherhood for Mary, in reality, the love of God displayed. For we know as it says in 1 John 4, verse 7 that '...God is love'. A love displayed in both the beauty of a mother's love in Mary and the pattern for our response to it in her son Jesus, even in the midst of his own pain and suffering.

So as pause at this time, wherever we may be at the moment and doubtless in the midst of our own trials and uncertainties – let's give thanks for the love of God this Mothering Sunday. Let's remember our own mothers, and those who have been a mother to us. In doing so, may we also be determined to follow the example of Jesus, recalling his demonstration of how the love of God in each of us should respond in the love and care of those who have been "mother" to us.

Lord Jesus Christ, you were born of the blessed virgin Mary and nurtured by her as a child, yet could still care for her, even on the cross. We pray that we may have strength to follow your good example in caring for our mothers. We commend to you all the mothers of our community and nation at this time. Give them strength and perseverance whatever their circumstances, and may their homes be havens of your love and peace, made

fragrant by your presence – who with the Father and in the unity of the Holy Spirit is alive and reigns with you,  
one God, now and forever. Amen