

MOTHERING SUNDAY SERMON – 21 MARCH 2022

Exodus 2.1-10, John 19.25a-26



In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The fourth Sunday in Lent. Traditionally the day servants were allowed off to return home and see mother. Mothering Sunday please, not Mother's Day.

It is the first Sunday we didn't worship in our buildings two years ago. The first Sunday we were closed. I was self-isolating as I had been on the phone to the GP on Friday morning about my blood pressure, and I had coughed. He had told me in no uncertain terms that I was not taking Olivia and Kieron's wedding that afternoon – so Archdeacon Chris stood in for me on two hours' notice – and I was told to stay in, and stay as far away from Julie as possible. In my dairy I wrote "It seemed ironic that, the year I don't have to get up and go and take a Mothering Sunday service, I can't cuddle up with my wife as we're in separate beds!" I posted my sermon, and Clive posted two sermons on the website. Last Mothering Sunday our church buildings were closed again. This year we're open, but we've got a lot of people off with the virus – Caroline has been off all week as both of her children have tested positive. Noah is now back at school, Grace still positive – and has had chicken pox as well. In the daily phone calls and emails I feel the frustration of a working mum who wants to do her job, needs to do her job, but has to put her children first. She came in at 10 o'clock on Wednesday night to spend half an hour getting all the toys and everything else ready for Toddler Group on Thursday morning, so all I had to do was get the milk out of the fridge.

Julie and I spend much of Baby and Toddler group chatting to the mums and the grannies – and admiring the fortnight-old baby who came along (yes, I want grandchildren). I'm very good at making tea – as one of the mums said, "this is the only time in my week when someone makes me a drink". The conversations are often about the difficulty of parenthood – balancing work and kids and money, and the fear that's around at the moment, fear at the way that costs are going up. Whatever he says, our millionaire chancellor and his billionaire wife do not understand the pressures on people, even in nice Allestree. I love our

huge Vicarage, but with my monthly energy bill going up from £104 to £211 a month – I know that if I was a younger Vicar, with children at home, there is no way I could afford to live in that house.

If I'm not careful I get sad, upset and angry at a wasted year, at all the opportunities being missed to “build back better”, and at everything else that annoys me.



The finding of Moses, probably by Francesco Zugno, 1709-1787

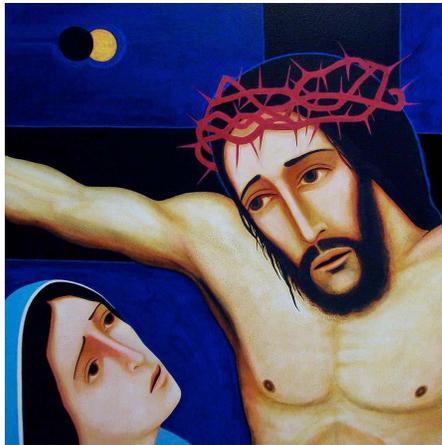
At least it is a gorgeous English spring, so let's go to Egypt, to meet a young lady called Jochebed. The Old Testament reading – “A man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman” – Moses mother, a woman named Jochebed. The child was hidden because the Egyptians had realised how many children their Israelite slaves were having, and had decided that all male children should be killed. A little more extreme than “All these foreigners, coming over here, having babies”, but still the same basis of fear and hatred. I expect that all of us were pleased and excited when our children were born – we have never known that level of fear, that you have given birth to a baby whose life is in danger, that someone will take your baby and kill it. Jochebed hid him, then placed him in a basket, in the hope that he would be found and taken care of – and Miriam the daughter was told to keep watch. I remember this as a picture on the wall of my Sunday School room – a lovely picture, happy baby, reeds beside the Nile, glamorous princess, attentive sister. I suspect the reality was somewhat different, but for Moses it all goes well. What a great start in life – and when God called him to lead his people out of slavery, Moses had that way in to pharaoh and the life of the court, the ability to speak, the ability to lead. All because Jochebed had refused to let her baby be taken by those who would kill it.

So am I enthusiastic and joyful about Jochebed, Miriam and the way baby Moses was saved, or do I get depressed that 3,000 years later mothers are still having to make huge sacrifices for their children – the pictures of Ukrainian

mums and children are horrendous enough, but what about refugee mums and children from countries that no one wants?



It depresses me that, 3000 years later, race, the colour of a person's skin, is still an issue. The treatment of child Q – how I would I feel if it had been my daughter strip-searched in her school by the police. It angers me too that we spend a huge amount of time and energy on safeguarding in our church communities, but apparently those rules don't apply to the Metropolitan Police or to the child's school. Unbelievable.



Michael O'Brien

Our Gospel reading is from the hardest day of the Christian year, the hardest day of all days – the day that Christ hung on the cross and died. The day that sin, that evil, seemed to have won. That evil that is embedded in every aspect of our world, every aspect of humanity – evil had triumphed. Christ, the Messiah, was hanging on the cross in pain and agony – the devil's victory was assured.

But even in the height of pain and agony, there is love. The love of a son for his mother, the mother for her son – even at the moment of death, love is not defeated. But too close to home this, but all of us know the reality, love is not defeated by death. You can nail God to a cross, you can rejoice in the triumph of evil – but love is still there. And in the darkness of this world through Covid, the darkness of this world in the wars of 2022, we know that even in the face of the death – especially in the face of death – love is still there. “Nothing can

separate us from the love of God” is not just a bible verse we trot out at funerals, it is the bedrock of our faith.



So, this Mothering Sunday, we celebrate. We our celebrate our mums, our kids, our friends kids, our grandchildren, so much love and energy and joy.

Harry and Sarah have just finished a large project, converting a Ford Transit van into a camper van. Sarah is the brains of the outfit, she has done the work, electrics, everything – Harry, who has the DIY skills of his dad, says his job has been to make the tea and go to B&Q.



Hannah, in between being dynamic all over the place, is now the proud owner of half an allotment – which she gets her father to dig. If I believe that Theo and Gareth rest in peace/rise in glory, then I must have no worries about them.



Theo baptism at St Matthew's

In our church life we welcome mums, and dads, for toddlers, for Christening, and for worship. Mother Church still has a role in lives and in community, and today's post communion prayer reminds us that we are all – parents or not – involved in the household of faith. It's on your Noticesheet – let's pray it together

Loving God,
as a mother feeds her children at the breast
you feed us in this sacrament with the food and drink of eternal life:
help us who have tasted your goodness
to grow in grace within the household of faith;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Peter Barham
25 March 2022