

Church at Home

Sunday 14th March 2021

The Fourth Sunday of Lent – Mothering Sunday

'Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures for ever.

Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story' Psalm 107: 1-2

Although Mothering Sunday is generally interpreted as Mother's Day by most people, with a focus on celebrating the role of motherhood and those who are like mothers to us, the original Christian festival takes a much wider perspective. Mother Church of course includes all those who care for each other within the fellowship, across the generations and beyond biological family groups. The well-known saying that 'it takes a whole village to raise a child' can equally be applied to the household of faith. And this is even more true today where, sadly, the care that might be expected within the nuclear family is not always present and therefore the wider family of 'brothers and sisters', 'parents and grandparents' and godparents in the faith is playing an ever more significant role. And this is also what God always intended. In our Gospel story Jesus was brought up in a family that was village-wide where all looked out for each other's children and the elderly in their community, and who also went on pilgrimage together of course, as described in today's story. Our focus for this Mothering Sunday is all those who have nurtured and cared for us on our journey of faith.



The Bible readings for this Sunday:

[Numbers 21: 4-9](#) - This is the story of the fiery serpents that attacked the people of God on their travels through the wilderness and of how the snake on the bronze pole was the focus for their healing. Jesus quotes this very story to give people an idea of how looking to the cross can bring us healing too.

[Psalm 107: 1-9](#) - This psalm invites us to thank God for his steadfast love and for all the many ways he has rescued us on our journey through life

[Colossians 3 12-17](#) - The apostle Paul uses the image of putting on clothes to invite us to put on God's character, such as compassion, kindness, patience and love, so that we might care for each other as fellow members of the family of the church.

[Luke 2:41-51](#) - This is the story of how Jesus around the age of 12 went up to the Festival of the Passover in Jerusalem. Mary and Joseph imagined he was still with them on their return journey when in fact he had found his way to the Temple where he was busy talking with the teachers. When Mary found him Jesus replies, 'Didn't you guess I would be in my Father's house?'

Before we sing, read or pray

As you settle down to read and pray through this week's church-at-home, pause first to spend a few moments being thankful for the many good gifts that God has given you. Psalm 107 is a pattern for such thankful prayer, with its repeated chorus of praise and thanks punctuated by personal remembrances of how God has been with his people. Include in your thanksgiving all those who have shown you care and love over the years, maybe, in particular, members of your family. And for some of us our mothers have been a particular example of that care.

You might like to use these words based on verse 8 of the Psalm to shape your thanksgivings.

*'Let us give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love
and his wonderful deeds for all people'*

Collect for Mothering Sunday from The Mothers' Union

God our Father,
your Son Jesus Christ lived in a family in Nazareth:
Grant that in our families on earth
we may so learn to love and to live together
that we may rejoice as one family in your heavenly home;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Suggested hymns:

[Beautiful Saviour \(by Stuart Townsend\)](#)
[Father I Place into your Hands](#)
[For the Beauty of the Earth](#)
[Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart](#)
[He's Got the Whole World in His Hands](#)

[Let us Build a House where Love can Dwell](#)
[Now Thank We All Our God](#)
[Tell Out My Soul](#)
[The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want](#)

First thoughts on today's Gospel reading – Lost in Jerusalem



It is every parent's nightmare to have their child go missing. No wonder Mary was so upset and very probably angry when they eventually found Jesus in the Temple. Three days and two sleepless nights are a lot to bear! On the other hand, Jesus was 12 by now and becoming a young adult within the culture of his day. He was finding his independence and so this story can easily resonate with many families where similar tensions can bubble up into rows and rebelliousness, questions and quarrels. The experience of losing Jesus

was possibly all the keener too after the fun and celebration of this annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover. Suddenly the mood of the festival changed and panic took over. On another level though, Mary and Joseph are being reminded that this child is not theirs to keep. He belongs to another more important Father and one day he will be part of a much greater worldwide family. Mary only began to realise this slowly as she returned home to Nazareth and thought back through all that had happened. One day Jesus would be back in Jerusalem for another Passover, when it would seem that Mary was to lose him forever. But after another three day wait, a much greater miracle takes place, of which this story is an early signpost.

(Artwork: Christ in the house of his parents by John Everett Millais 1849)

For our prayers, let us remember:

- People who have shown us love and care over the years within the family and beyond.
- The care of teachers who work hard to make school a safe and Covid-free environment for all.
- Our churches making plans to return to 'face-to-face' church around Easter; and for creative plans to tell the story of Easter in the village
- Those we know who are sick, at home or in hospital.
- Families struggling to care for children in war-torn and needy parts of our world.
- Particular items from the news that God has put on your heart this morning.

Add any other people and situations that The Holy Spirit brings to your mind as you have been praying and then say our family prayer, **The Lord's Prayer**.

End your time of church-at-home by saying out loud the words of **The Grace**, reaching out your hands to include in your imagination all those you know and love, who live here in the village and beyond.

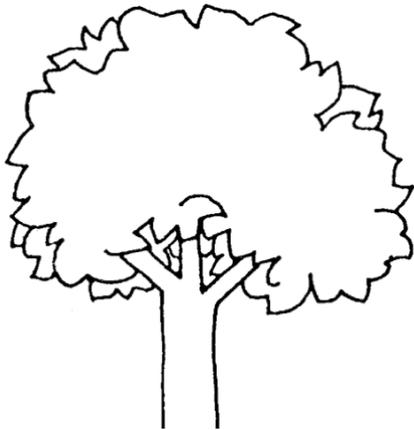
Church Leaders Contact: - Roger - 01992 815 838. Martyn – 01992 814121

For further reflection

Taken from resources provided by Chelmsford Diocese for Mothering Sunday

'It takes a village to raise a child' is an African proverb that describes how family life needs to be shared among a whole community. Although families may look very different in our own western communities, it's good for us to remember on this Mothering Sunday all those who have been involved in our lives and helped shape us into the people we are today.

Make your 'village tree'



You will need: a large background picture of a tree outline for everyone, paper, crayons, scissors.

Draw your own 'village group' of care for each other, cutting out photos if possible and sticking them on to the tree background. Talk about this village tree and how it is one group made up of several members - this will include extended family, community members, church members and Godparents; talk about what things unite them all. Once we are back in church, these pictures of care groups could be mounted onto a very large tree background to reveal the church's 'household of faith' as an enormous family group, where we support and care for each other.

The following chorus could be an appropriate one to listen to or sing along to together after this exercise:

[I am the church. We are the church](#)

Two prayers for our church 'household of faith'

Father God, we are your children.
Lord Jesus, through the cross we are made your brothers and sisters.
Holy Spirit, together we are the temple where you unite us with one another in love.
Help us to discover what it means to be your family:
where the lonely can find a home
where the troubled can find rest
where the hurt can find healing
and the outsider can find a refuge.
May the all-age kingdom of heaven be seen on earth,
where all are one in Christ Jesus.
Amen

God of all people,
children and grandparents,
teenagers and elderly,
young adults and godparents,
working and retired,
single and parents,
help us all to honour and celebrate each other,
in communities of grace and love
for your glory. Amen



This mural of a tree was painted by young and old in a village called Bodopur in Bangladesh. Each leaf is the handprint of a person who lives in that village. All ages took part and among many things it expresses their mutual love and care for each other in this Christian community.



For further reflection and activities for the whole family

[Here](#) is the Gospel story

[Here](#) is a short film clip of the Gospel (with a very blond and blue-eyed Jesus!)

[Here](#) is a short picture version of the Gospel

[Here](#) is a reflective version of the story with wooden figures and wondering questions

Questions to talk about together:

I wonder...

.....how it was possible that Mary and Joseph didn't miss Jesus for a whole day on the way home?

.....why the teachers in the Temple were surprised by what Jesus said and did?

.....what you make of Jesus's reply his mother? Isn't he being a bit rude and unkind?

.....whether Mary had perhaps forgotten all the promises and the miracles that happened when Jesus was born? Why might she have wanted to forget?

.....what Jesus and the teachers talked about?



Young Jesus in the Temple by Frans Schwartz 1850-1917

Prayer activity: *Young and old together, praying for each other:*

Find a picture of one of the youngest and one of the oldest members of your extended family. Talk about each picture - when that person was born, where they are now, what they like and dislike, and what challenges and choices they face in their lives.

Whatever age we are, God cares about us with the same loving commitment and God longs that each of us become the best we can be and make a difference for good in the world.

Put the pictures side-by-side and talk about ways each could help the other to do just that.

Pause and then hold a hand over each picture and pray that God will help bring the generations together to support and encourage each other.

You may like to use this prayer:

*Loving God,
Lord of the oldest and the youngest,
Who are the same yesterday, today and for ever,
Bring the generations together to be a blessing to each other
So that the young may learn from the old and the old from the young
And both may better learn how to become your children
And continue to trust in you and care for each other, day after day
Amen*



A picture to decorate as you talk about the story....

