

## Rev'd Emily's Sermon – Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2024

### Mothering Sunday

#### Readings:

**Colossians 3: 12-17**

**John 19: 25-27**

For some people, today will be a celebration. Where we honour our mothers, or those strong or faithful women in our lives who have inspired us over the years. We also today honour the Mother's Union and their work in this place and throughout the world, who nurture women and girls to become all that they can be and lead fulfilling, blessed lives.

However, for some, today will be a painful day. Particularly if your mother is longer with us, or your relationship with you mother has been painful and difficult and there is nothing worse than going round a card shop, looking at the cards filled with heartfelt sentiments and thinking, 'there's nothing here for me.....if only.'

However, there is something or someone here for you. That something is The Church, our Mother, the Bride of Christ and that someone, is Mary, the mother of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. In this morning's gospel reading from John. Jesus is crucified and at the foot of the cross stands Mary, her sister and Mary Magdalene. Mary Magdalene, who was despised by the crowds is part of Christ's family. She remains with the other women courageously present and possibly in the face of overwhelming danger, when all the others, the men have run away to hide.

You have no doubt heard me saying in conversation, that you can never have too many statues of Mary! But for people who don't really know a lot about her, they can be confused as to who it is we are looking to, when we pray at the statues of Our Lady and why do I have so many! For those of us whose mothers are no longer with us and for those who are estranged from theirs, Mary is a powerful figure who stood at the foot of the cross and wept as Jesus was crucified and she did not close her eyes she did not look away. As Jesus hung on the tree, dying he looked upon her and entrusted her to the care of his beloved disciple but more than this, we are entrusted to HER care. As she was a compassionate and devoted presence to Jesus, she can be this for us too. She can be our comfort and our hope. She was a constant presence in Jesus' life from the moment of His birth to the moment of His death when on Joseph, the bible remains silent. But to us, she is our Mother, graciously and with care, listening to our petitions, drawing them to her heart and bringing them to Jesus Christ.

The 'Memorare' which was written by St Bernard reads:

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,  
That never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection,  
Implored thy help, or sought thy intercession, was left unaided.  
Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O virgin of virgins, my Mother.  
To thee do I come, before thee I stand,  
Sinful and sorrowful.  
O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions  
But in thy mercy, hear and answer thee.  
Amen.

She listens to us when we think no one else has and understands the depths of our joys and our sorrows and she remains faithful and true, where we have been let down by others.

The Church too, is the mother of our souls. Why is the church thought to be like a mother? Because it is the bride of Christ which will be united and reconciled with him at the wedding feast. We are her children. As we are part of the church, so to will we be drawn into the feast of the lamb. But although the building is important, The church is more than just the building, it is its people. It is their care that the Church seeks.

A mother is one of God's most special creatures. In her is carried the seed of life. In the depths of the mother's body—and in some sense in her soul—the child takes shape and grows. Although the mother has never seen or held her child, she loves him deeply. She will talk to him, contemplate him, make plans for him, and begin to hope for his future...

The Church is a place where there is hope for those who have lost hope in life and in themselves. But how do we 'be' the church?

Paul gives us some ideas from his letter to the Colossians:

As God's chosen ones, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience.' He continues, we must forgive others, we must clothe ourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.'

The church needs you. The church needs your love and care. It needs its people. Churches can be places of hope, of welcome, but without people to welcome them, there will be nothing for the desperate and the hurting to come to. Now you might be sitting there thinking you have nothing to offer whatsoever, or you're already giving what you can. You are just you. But it is precisely because you are you that you might be called to serve God. Could you serve on our PCC? Could you help at coffee mornings? Could you work to welcome families that step through our doors? Perhaps you might feel that this is not the time or place to be asking for volunteers. Perhaps you are afraid of the future...

Especially when we are moving into a period of uncertainty, of challenge.

Fear is the opposite of faith. Fear blinds us from our faith in God and leaves us feeling that we have to depend on and do everything ourselves and, in a sense, we do bear some responsibility, but we must not lose hope. In the face of fear and loss of faith, Mary, stood at the foot of the cross and Paul in his letters to the early church, encourages us onwards saying 'do not fear' I know, it is easier said than done... But perhaps we might look to the example of Mary and the small group of women who remained at Christ's side in the shadow of death. Perhaps we might look to and honour the legacy of Mary Sumner and the Mother's Union. Perhaps we can honour and treasure the memories of those loving and courageous women in our own lives, who remained and still remain resolute and steadfast and are unfailingly and always clothed not in fear or hatred, but are 'clothed in love.'