

Good Morning and Happy Mother's Day!

This may not be the way we have done a Mother's Day previously but despite circumstances changing God never changes.

We can be thankful for the gift of technology which enables us to meet in this way we shall discover and develop how we can use it in the weeks ahead!

**Most merciful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned in thought, word
and deed.**

We have not loved you with our whole heart.

We have not loved our neighbour as ourselves.

In your mercy forgive what we have been,

help us to amend what we are,

and direct what we shall be;

that we may do justly, love mercy and walk humbly

with you our God.

Amen

May the Father of all mercies
Cleanse us from our sins,
And restore us in his image
To the praise and glory of His name,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Philippinans 4: 4-9

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable— if anything is excellent or praiseworthy— think about such things.

⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me— put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you

I love Mother's Day, I love flowers, it feels as if it is also it's part of Spring arriving and for me a significant point in our journey through Lent.

The day in the UK has always been a part of Lent and associated with reflecting on our spiritual nurture and our Mother church. Traditionally, of course, our Mums and our Mother church were often located close by! So visiting one linked with visiting the other also and the day is more correctly called Mothering Sunday.



Mother's, family, caring for those nearest and dearest to us can often be challenging and complex and we don't always 'get it right' either as parents, children or carers. We are thankful for the times when we have, for the times we have managed to get it right to listen, we love those times of family togetherness and especially now as we face physical separation we value them even more! For many of us our Mother's may have passed away and today is about remembering with mixed emotions of joy and sadness the role they played in our lives and the blessing they were to us. And we can be thankful for them.

For some of us the term 'Mother' may not bring to mind solely our biological Mother but may include others who have cared for us and 'mothered' us at stages in our lives. And we can be thankful for them.

The other aspect of Mothering Sunday is to think of those who have supported us and nurtured us spiritually. This may have been in person, a special friend who we could share with and ask for prayer, may be an author who has helped us study God's word, a preacher or speaker who opens us understanding for us. We all need those who have nurtured and helped us grow spiritually, who have helped us grow in our spiritual lives. And we can be thankful for them.



As we think of those who have cared for us and those we have cared for, our spiritual homes and families, I want us also as to remember the greatest love of all, that perfect love available for each one of us. The love of God which can reach across all boundaries and into all homes. I have on my wall at home a little plaque which I got from my Grandmother which is based on Romans 8:35.

“Who can separate us from the love of Christ?”

What can separate Thee ever from the Lord’s undying love?

Neither present things nor future, things below or things above!

God’s love is perfect and ever present, ever attentive, a solid and stable place of peace.

I want us to finally look at two passages. The first is one of my favourites and as I was preparing about what to say this morning this was brought to mind. It is from Philippians 4: 4-7.

Paul, as a spiritual mentor, leaves these final remarks at the end of his letter to the Philippians, saying, keep on doing these things which you have heard and learned from me. He encourages to lay our worries before the Lord, to seek the peace which surpasses the difficulties around us and then moves on to give us a focus for our thoughts and feelings.



At the moment we are all going through a process of assimilating what is happening in our nation. I admit to at times being sad, even a bit weepy, at the enormity on a national and individual level of what is happening barely able to also perceive that this is also global. Yet we are called to rejoice, that does not mean being happy about the situation!! But having a sense of peace which enables an inner joy despite circumstances based on our knowledge of God's love and care for us. We are not helpless, we can by prayer and supplication lay our troubles, and fears at the feet of the Lord.

Mothering Sunday at the start of this period of change in our nation does give us that pause to reflect on those who have and those who do still care for us. To continue to reach out via letters, email, phone and 'facetime'!



And then at other times I feel that for so many people and families this may be a time to pause, to chat about things they have never discussed before, to look through family photos, to draw a family tree, to play games. We have generations who have never known, as I and many of us did as a child, what a quiet Sunday with shops closed was like.

There will be Mothers and carers in this land who, starting tomorrow, are going to be able to spend more time with their children than ever before. Tomorrow will not begin with waking up and grabbing school bags while also trying to get ready for work, there may be a little less chaos in some households! Many parents have never been in a position before to be a stay at home parents with their children, it's been a choice they have never felt able to make.

Let's pray for parents and carers of our children in the weeks and months ahead that this may be a time of discovery, an awakening of closeness and understanding, a time for long conversations and long times of listening! That into homes within this land the opportunity to reflect may also draw them closer to an understanding of God's love for them.

The lectionary reading for this morning includes Psalm 23. And nothing could be more perfect or timely than for us to finish with than focusing on that. We are all familiar with the Psalm but I have included today a version arranged by my husband Peter a few years back. The change in language helps me to see and feel it afresh and I hope it may help you too.

The Lord is my Shepherd

The Lord watches over me; Nothing more shall I need.

He shows me the way and soothes my mind.

He stills my troubles and brings peace to my world. He restores my soul.

He leads me in the ways of goodness and humility, Faithfulness and strength,

And I am thankful to him.

Yes! Even when the way is dark, the work is hard and friends are far away,

I will not give way to fear, for you are with me.

Your teachings and your protection still guide and comfort me.

In times of conflict, you sustain me with nourishment

Beyond the provision of the richest table. Your words flow through me and over me.

I grow and am enriched beyond measure.

Your goodness and mercy shall work through me all the days of my life,

And I will live in your ways forever.

(Arrangement by Peter Smith)



This Mothering Sunday let's be thankful for all those who have loved and nurtured us both physically and spiritually. Let us pray for the Lord to strengthen and bless those who are caring for others at this time, may they be young or old. Let us lay our worries and fears for the weeks ahead at the feet of our ever loving Father and may we find a peace which surpasses understanding which will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy name:
Thy kingdom come:
Thy will be done: on earth as it is in
heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses, as we
forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation but
deliver us from evil for Thine is the
kingdom, the power and the glory for
ever and ever.
Amen.



In darkness and in light,
In trouble and in joy,
Help us, heavenly Father,
To trust your love
To serve your purpose,
And to praise your name;
Through Jesus Christ our
Lord.

Amen

