



Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 15 March 2026 - Mothering Sunday

Lectionary Readings (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Exodus 2. 1-10 (or 1 Samuel 1.20-28); Psalm 34.11-20 (or Psalm 127.1-4); 2 Corinthians 1.3-7 (or Colossians 3.12-17); Luke 2. 33-35 (or John 19.25b-27)

Homily

Today's homily has been written by the Revd Steven Rothwell, Clergy Development Officer

Mothering Sunday (based on Exodus 2 passage)

Christians have a fondness for stories in which God does things. Stories where God gets into the act, makes things very clear, or gives people directions about what they should do. For example, when God speaks to Moses out of the burning bush. Or when the sea is parted for Moses and his company to flee the pursuing Egyptian soldiers. We like to read about a 'hands-on' kind of God. We often like stories where God makes things clear.

A holy man was invited to a neighbouring monastery to instruct the monks who resided there, spending their time in the practice of meditation. The holy man exhorted the monks to meditate constantly and with great energy and zeal. He told them that if they practiced with full-hearted effort, true understanding would come to them. "But you really must put your hearts into it," he stressed.

All of the monks listened attentively and smiled politely.

Finally, one old monk raised his hand and said, "Our way of prayer is a little different than yours. We have been meditating and praying in the simplest fashion *without* effort; for we believe that a person must wait, instead, to be illumined by the grace of God. Doesn't illumination come from doing nothing, so that wisdom comes to a person uninvited?"

The Holy man, when he heard this, laughed out loud and said, "My dear fellow, the reason we must put so much effort into prayer is because we believe God has *already* done enough!"

There is a need to discern between knowing when our actions are required and when we need to let go of our own agency and let God be God.

In the account from the book of Exodus, we read of a critical moment in Israel's history, when the stakes are very high indeed, when it could just as easily have happened that there may never have been a nation called Israel. It would seem that God is not directly involved at all. What happens depends upon what five courageous women decide to do out of pure respect for human life and decency. It is not obvious where God is directing the action here. The midwives, Shiphrah and Puah defied Pharaoh because they "feared God", the author says, and Pharaoh's daughter and her helpers did what they did because she "took pity" on a little baby.

That is how a nation got saved. That is how there ever came to be anything left of the Hebrews in Egypt before there ever was a Moses to save them. We may feel that God was on the side of these five women, whether things appeared that way or not, that God was somehow working behind the scenes, prompting people to do the very thing that God would later give them a hand in finishing.

In this story we are reminded that before what needed to happen did happen, it was a group of regular women who really made things possible. They didn't wait for God to show them. Maybe, the way they understood it, God had already done enough. What I find particularly interesting here is that the women re-imagine what it meant to be a family.

The message here is about taking risks to create a loving relationship. This is a message that applies to all of us – mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, neighbours and friends. The Christian faith has always been concerned with issues of fidelity in relationships and the importance of the family, but we have tied it up with our societal adoption of the nuclear family – the model of mum, dad and 2.4 children. This isn't a model that we get from the Bible – far from it. In scripture we read about men having concubines and multiple wives, of families being extensive, of families which are open to bringing in others and caring for them – anything but the nuclear family!

More important is an affirmation of faithfulness in any relationship – and the message that family exists where people are loving towards one another – not just where there is a mum, dad and children.

Jesus' ministry opened up the broad perspective of what a family might look like and this wasn't necessarily a radical new approach so much as it was the affirmation of how a community of faithful people might support one another that had its roots in the stories of the Hebrew people. There is no room for exclusivity or arrogance in the Biblical model of the faithful community. Though we often do not live up to this ideal, it is still something we strive for. God calls us to be loving, open, forgiving – something to take seriously and seek to be; for whenever we are like that, others might also desire to be a part of the Church family.

Maya Angelou, in her poem 'Human Family', captures the essence of what God's world-wide family might be like:

I note the obvious differences
in the human family.
Some of us are serious,
some thrive on comedy.

Some declare their lives are lived
as true profundity,
and others claim they really live
the real reality.

The variety of our skin tones
can confuse, bemuse, delight,
brown and pink and beige and purple,
tan and blue and white.

I note the obvious differences
between each sort and type,
but we are more alike, my friends,
than we are unalike.

We are more alike, my friends, than we are unalike.
We are more alike, my friends, than we are unalike.

Ways to Engage all Generations

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the story/passage is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder who your favourite character is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder how _____ felt or I wonder how _____ felt when _____ happened?
- I wonder how you feel about _____?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder what the [tree, pearl, coin] could really be?
- I wonder why _____ said _____?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

Suggested intercessions

Prayers for Mothering Sunday

We remember the stories of the women who cared for Moses
as we worship today.

We think of their example to all those who care for others.

We remember their willingness to take a risk, to put the life of Moses into God's hands and
trusting him into the care of others.

Enable us to learn to be bold in our concern for our families and friends and neighbours,
and help us give thanks for all who care for us. **Amen**

Loving God,
give us the will to care for children and young people.

Help us to work for hope.

Give us the compassion to help those who are lonely.

Help us to work for hope.

Give us the generosity to share what we have.

Help us to work for hope.

Give us the kindness to support those who struggle.

Help us to work for hope.

Give us the energy to work to bring change.

Help us to work for hope.

Give us a heart that loves and gives without conditions.

Help us to work for hope. Amen.

Suggested hymns/songs

- Now Thank We All Our God
- Blessed Assurance
- For the Beauty of the Earth
- Lord of All Hopefulness
- Brother, Sister, Let Me Serve You
- Like a Mother Who Has Borne Us (John Bell)
- When I Needed a Neighbour
- Be Still for the Presence of the Lord
- Make Me a Channel of Your Peace
- Spirit of the Living God

Activities to accompany the service

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- reflectionary.org – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://engageworship.com) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@lectionary resource)