

Worship Together



Mothering Sunday 2024

Mothering Sunday in the UK originates as a day when people were released from their work to return home to their home and Mother church. Mothering Sunday coming in Lent offers us the opportunity to think about where we have come from and to think about ways in which we have been shaped as Christians today.

- 1. Morning has broken like the first morning;
blackbird has spoken like the first bird.
Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!
Praise for them springing, fresh from the Word!**
- 2. Sweet the rain's new fall sunlit from heaven,
like the first dewfall on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden,
sprung in completeness where his feet pass.**
- 3. Mine is the sunlight! Mine is the morning
born of the one light Eden saw play!
Praise with elation, Praise every morning,
God's re-creation of the new day!**

Written by Eleanor Farjeon (1881-1965)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=VL9xXyLrq00

Prayers (from URC prayer resources)

God of love and hope, in this season of Lent we are travelling with Jesus from the Wilderness to the Garden. We remember the wilderness where the seeds of his calling took root; where he planted wholeness rather than selfishness; watered with integrity rather than

achievement; nourished with love rather than fear. We give thanks for Jesus' wise choices, we praise the Spirit's abundant growth, e worship you, Source of all Life.

As we travel through Lent, may we too be transformed: may we plant seeds of wholeness and turn away from vanity; may we water with integrity and turn away from earthly success; may we nourish with love and turn away from fear. That we may grow as we follow your wisdom; bloom, as we trust your abundance; and be transformed by your loving companionship. **Amen.**

Readings: Exodus 2: 1 – 10

Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him. Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said.

Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?"

"Yes, go," she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him. When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, "I drew him out of the water."

Sermon

The back story of this passage is found in Genesis. The family of Abraham's grandson, Jacob, ends up in Egypt when Joseph rescues the whole family from famine. Then in Exodus chapter 1 we find that the descendants are becoming a very large group; over a couple hundred years, God has blessed them with many, many children, and they are now a formidable force living in Egypt. The king of Egypt is afraid that these people might turn against him, so he forces them into slave labour, and

commands his people to throw all the newborn Israelite boys into the river to drown them.

Here in Chapter 2, the story zooms in on one specific family with a newborn boy. We read that the boy was beautiful. That by itself is not unusual. Surely any mother would find her newborn boy wonderful and beautiful. But apparently, Moses' parents sensed something special about their son and had faith in God to hide him (see Hebrews 11) risking the retribution of the Egyptians if they were caught. Then, knowing they could not hide him for ever, they place the child in a basket and float him down the Nile, the very place that was decreed by Pharaoh to be his death.

As the story progresses and the baby is found by the Pharaoh's daughter and Miriam, Moses' sister, who had been watching what was happening from the riverbank, offers to get a Hebrew woman to nurse the child. And the beautiful postscript of the story that means so much to us on Mother's Day. Moses' mother, Jochebed, who had felt the pain of handing her child over to God as an act of faith eventually gets her child back again as nursemaid. Such was the faithfulness of God to her, for her faithfulness to God.

We entrust our children to God but we never lose them; he will bring them back to us and even though our children may not be with us physically as they make their way in the world, the work of a mother, the work of a father is never done. The nurturing, the caring, the courage and the faith is a lifetime's work, a lifetime's privilege.

In the Old and New Testament times children were understood to be a sign of God's blessing on a community. Parenthood was seen as living, breathing proof of the presence, power and blessing of God. No more so than in the love of the mother. So today, we celebrate mothers. And we thank all parents for what they are doing in showing love through the rearing of children, and for what they are achieving in fulfilling God's purposes for this community and the wider world. We thank God for our children, and we anticipate the raising of a new generation of faithful Christians: God's people.

Prayers

Lord God, hear our prayers for the world you have given us.

- We pray for communities of Christians gathered throughout the world today, for all women, men and children who seek to know God's will and to do it.
- Loving God, as we see the brokenness of the world we pray for healing among the nations, for food where there is hunger, for freedom where there is oppression; for joy where there is pain, for peace among all your children.
- We pray especially for mothers and for stepmothers, grandmothers, godmothers, and all those women who have loved and laughed, wept and worked to care for others. Bless all parents and all carers and strengthen those families living under stress.
- Loving God, we pray for those living with illness and for those who love them and struggle as they witness their loved ones' failing health and daily challenges.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayers. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

1. Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us, you are one with us, Mary's Son - cleansing our souls from all their sin, pouring your love and goodness in; Jesus, our love for you we sing, Living Lord.
2. Lord Jesus Christ, now and every day teach us how to pray, Son of God. You have commanded us to do this in remembrance, Lord, of you; into our lives your power breaks through, Living Lord.
3. Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us, born as one of us, Mary's Son - led out to die on Calvary, risen from death to set us free; Living Lord Jesus, help us see you are Lord.
4. Lord Jesus Christ, I would come to you, live my life for you, Son of God; all your commands I know are true; your many gifts will make me new; into my life your power breaks through, Living Lord.

Written by Patrick Appleford. Blessing

www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKsbd5UqKkc

Blessing

God of grace be the strength in our lives as we go about our days, now and forever more, **Amen**