



Worship for Mothering Sunday 14 March 2021

Introduction

Today is the fourth Sunday of Lent and so is Mothering Sunday when we focus on our mothers even though for many of us, they are no longer with us. We think of the love they gave or give us in the way that God so loved us that he gave his beloved son to the world. Weoley Hill have traditionally given daffodils to everyone who comes to church as we all had or have mothers and Weoley Castle has done something similar. If you can take some daffodils or other flowers to someone who is by themselves today. I hope it will brighten their day.

Heavenly Father, we worship you as the life force of the universe, flowing through all things, sustaining and reviving. We worship you in the light that falls on us unseen, blessing us and guiding us towards you. We worship you for the love that nurtures us. Life, light and love, we adore you. Amen.

Hymn Love divine, all loves excelling.

Opening prayers

Gracious God, on this special day of thanksgiving, we catch a glimpse, through a mother's love for her child, of your love for us; the care, dedication, and devotion you show to all your children which makes you as much 'our Mother' as 'our Father'. As a mother nurtures her children, instructing, feeding, clothing, guiding, so you nurture us, carefully leading us towards maturity. As a mother tends her children, comforting in times of distress, reassuring in times of uncertainty, encouraging in times of challenge, nursing in times of sickness, so you tend us, always there to lift us up and set us on our feet again when we fall. As a mother protects her children watching over them day by day, alert to the danger, keeping them from harm, and ready if necessary, to sacrifice herself for their sakes so you protect us, your arms constantly encircling us, your hand delivering us from evil. Gracious God, Mother and Father of us all we rejoice in the wonder of your love and the constancy of your care, gratefully we respond, in joyful worship and heartfelt thanksgiving. For the intensity of your love, Lord, we praise you.

Gracious God, we are reminded today of how easily we take a mother's love for granted, failing to express our thanks for the care we receive, slow to demonstrate our appreciation for the patient nurture given over so many years. We are reminded equally of how easily we take your love for granted, failing

to thank you for the blessings you shower upon us, the care with which you daily surround us and the joy with which you fill our lives. We have assumed that words do not need saying, that our thankfulness can be taken as read. We have believed love comes easily, failing to recognise what it can sometimes cost. We have imagined because no thanks are asked no thanks are necessary. Gracious God help us to understand the joy we can bring through saying thank you not just for today but every day, not just to our mothers but to everyone and not just to everyone but to you. And help us, through the act of thanksgiving, to recognise how much we have to be thankful for. For forgetting to show our gratitude, Lord forgive us. In the name of Christ we ask it. Amen

Reading: John 3: 14-21

Reflection

Last year Mothering Sunday was on 22 March the day before our first lockdown, but we decided not to hold a service in church because of the pandemic and now over a year later we are still in a lockdown situation even though we did have some weeks of more freedom last summer.

In an ideal situation the love of a mother is unconditional and eternal. But we are aware there are situations where this is not so. We hear in the media of cases where there is abuse and neglect for all sorts of reasons. The only source of eternal love is that of God who gave his beloved son as written in John 3: 16. This is probably the most well-known verse in the Bible. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (NIV)

This verse is part of the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus, which is one of the few dialogues recorded in the gospels with a Pharisee. Nicodemus was a Jewish leader and a Pharisee. He comes to Jesus at night-time as though he was afraid of what others might say if they saw him going to find Jesus. He was curious about this teacher and wanted to seek him out. Jesus tells him about God's love and the offer of eternal life to the world. He also uses the image of light and darkness to explain the concept of judgement. Those who do wrong things avoid the light, because it reveals what they are doing, but those who do what is good and true are attracted to the light.

How do we understand 'eternal life'? And what difference does that make to our everyday lives?

One way to help describe eternal things is using the Möbius strip, a one-sided surface that can be constructed by affixing the ends of a rectangular strip after first giving



one of the ends a one-half twist. This space exhibits interesting properties, such as having only one side, so it goes on and on and remaining in one piece when split down the middle. The properties of the strip were discovered independently and almost simultaneously by two German mathematicians, August Ferdinand Möbius and Johann Benedict Listing, in 1858. *from Britannica website*

There is a parallel of God's love being shown in the parable of the absent vineyard owner who keeps sending slaves and workers back to get the harvest as recorded in Mark 12: 1-8 However, those left in charge seek them out, insult and beat or even kill them. As a last resort the son is sent but the tenants kill him as well. One thing shown here is God's continual love as he keeps on sending even though he knows the outcome. God's love keeps on being given and it is up to us to show this in all aspects of our lives.

I find the concept of eternal life comforting and sustaining and makes me less fearful of death. Life is all about love and it continues beyond death.

Those of us who are privileged to be mothers (fathers too) have the chance to show our love to our children and grandchildren. But we should also try to love everyone we meet as love is not just for families and friends but for everyone, even those who we find it difficult to like and our enemies. This is an aspect of Christian life some people find so hard to do. Apparently after the atrocity in Christchurch, New Zealand 2 years ago tomorrow, 15 March, when 51 Muslims at prayer were killed by an extremist gunman a Muslim man who lost his wife in the attack publicly proclaimed that he forgave the attacker, saying 'I don't hate him. I love him'. This had a profound influence on many people in the city and illustrated the power of love versus hate. Many Christians have been humbled by this which is similar to the forgiveness Gordon Wilson shared after the death of his daughter at the Enniskillen Remembrance Day bombing in 1987.

Knowing God's love and sharing it leads us to an eternal life with him so that love can continue to be given.

Amen

Hymn read as a poem R&S 33 Eternal God, your love's tremendous glory

Prayers for the people & Lord's Prayer

Gracious God, you know what it is to love your children – to watch over them tenderly, anxiously, proudly and constantly. You know what this means, for you have called us your children, and you care for each of us as deeply as a mother cares for her child and as deeply as you loved your son. So now we pray for those entrusted with the responsibility of motherhood – all those who

watch over their children in the same way, with the same feelings and intensity. Grant to each one your wisdom, guidance and strength. We pray especially for single mothers – those faced with the challenge on their own, with no one else to share the demands or joys of parenthood. Give to each of them patience, devotion and dedication. We pray for those who have lost their mother or never known them, those orphaned as children or given up for adoption, those whose mothers have died all of whom this day brings pain rather than pleasure. Grant them your comfort, your support, and the assurance of your love is always with them. We pray for those separated from their children – those whose children have moved away from home, those who have suffered a miscarriage or been through an abortion, those who have endured the agony of a child's death. Give to them your help, your solace and hope for the future. We pray for those who find motherhood difficult possibly having experienced an abusive relationship themselves from their mothers. Give to them your love and support that they may know what it is to be loved and cared for. Let us take time in silence to bring our concerns to God. Gracious God, you understand what mothers face, what they give and what they feel. Accept our thanks for them on this day and grant them your special blessing. Lord of love hear our prayers in the name of Christ. Amen
Let us say together the Lord's Prayer.

Offertory prayer

Loving God, whatever we give to you, it can never match your offering to us in Christ. Through him you gave your all, emptying yourself, taking the form of a servant, enduring even death upon a cross, so that we may share your life. Teach us as we offer our lives and our gifts in joyful response ready for you to use as your will for your kingdom's sake. Amen

Hymn In Christ alone my hope is found

Blessing

Whoever you are, wherever you go, whatever your strength, whatever your weaknesses, God will be with you, to hold, to heal, to guide and to bless. Go then in peace assured of his love. Amen