

WEEKLY SERMON

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May all who mother and parent know the blessing of God this Mothering Sunday

Luke 2: 33-35

Mothering Sunday is a time of joy punctuating what can seem the long wilderness, wasteland of Lent. The weather is improving, it's lighter, daffodils and tulips (my favourite spring flowers!) are in abundance. Blossom is sprinkling on the trees, birds are beginning to nest; and it is always wonderful to see new-born lambs, literally gambolling, in the fields. There is new life, new hope and a fresh purpose.

As a child I use to love making my Mum a Mother's Day card and taking up that all-important and well-deserved cup of tea and toast in bed. Sadly, I now no longer have my Mum with me, but I am blessed with many 'surrogate', motherly figures amongst my congregations who lovingly 'mother' me.

The gospel story of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, has new Mum Mary, offering her first born son to God. Simeon speaks prophetically about who Jesus is and what he has come to do and then blesses this small family unit. It is a time of joy and thanksgiving – and yet a shadow is looming.

This child will be “destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel”, Jesus, Son of God, will bring division (one cannot help but think of the present war in Gaza).

This child will be a sign that will be opposed, what is hidden will be brought into the open – Jesus' ministry will produce conflicting responses from across the social divides of first century Palestine.

And, as anyone who has parented a child (whatever age the 'child' is) will know, like Mother Mary, is at some time you are bound to have your heart and soul pierced ... that comes with the territory of love.

Mary would know the division and opposition that Jesus brought in his ministry. She would witness his suffering and death on the cross. She will also know the joy of his resurrection. But first, like us, she would need to take up her own cross, not only as his Mother but also as his disciple and follower.

This Mothering Sunday, as we give thanks for our mothers or those who have mothered us. Let us remember in our thoughts and prayers those children and mothers of war – of Ukraine and Russia; of Israel and Palestine; of all places of conflict. Like Simeon, we must prayer for God's protection and blessing to be upon them. Amen

Rev Karen Herschell, Vicar of Balderstone, Mellor and Samesbury

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