

Mothering Sunday – 22nd March 2020

Readings

Exodus 2:1-10

Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, ² 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. ³ 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. ⁴ His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.

⁵ 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. ⁶ 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. ⁷ Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?"

⁸ "Yes, go," she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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."

John 19:25-27

²⁵ Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," ²⁷ and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Reflection

'Never did I expect to give up so much this Lent' – a phrase that has been doing the rounds on social media this Lent.

The government's announcements this week that have led to more and more self-isolation and closure of businesses and meeting places has seen many of us give up far more than we were ever expecting. When I think back to Ash Wednesday, the idea that we would not be gathering in person on Mothering Sunday, just a month later, was inconceivable. Even when I preached last Sunday and handed out the prayer cards that we are using this morning, I honestly expected many of us to still be able to meet in church – at least for another week or two... It's all come so suddenly, and for many of us this week may have felt quite overwhelming as we begin to imagine what life might look like in the coming months.

It is particularly poignant today to find ourselves worshipping as a dispersed community on this Mothering Sunday, a day on which children would traditionally return to their family and go together to their mother church. Many of us are separated from our wider family today, and unable to mark Mothering Sunday as perhaps we would wish. But it is important that we sacrifice our opportunities to meet together in person for the greater good of keeping one another safe, and stopping the NHS becoming more overwhelmed.

Yet when we give something up, something else will often fill its place. As Christians we are encouraged during Lent to turn to God when the sacrifices we make feel too much to carry. To fill that empty place with prayer, to turn to God and trust that God will carry us.

The Levite woman in our reading from Exodus knew what it was to give up more than she expected, and trust that God would carry her and her son. With the life of her son in danger following Pharaoh's decree that every Hebrew boy should be thrown into the river to die; she decided there was no other option than to make him a basket and leave him in the rushes by the Nile river, and trust that God would look after him. She made him a basket, or in Hebrew 'tebah' which is the same word used to describe the Ark, in Noah's Ark – a place of protection in turbulent times. And what happened? Well God was faithful. God protected the baby, with Pharaoh's daughter saving his life by adopting him; and it worked out well for his mother, who

was taken on as his nurse to care for him; and he grew to be Moses, the one who would lead the Israelites out of slavery to freedom in the promised land. Moses who trusted in God's power to save.

It's an amazing how the sacrifice that a mother was prepared to make, led to more and greater care for Moses and his family – with Pharaoh's daughter now involved to help support them financially. How the love and care of his sister Miriam, his mother Jochebed, and of Pharaoh's daughter nurtured him through the early years, and went on to contribute to the greater good of the salvation of the Israelite nation.

We may be making big sacrifices at the moment, and that is not easy. But let us turn to God in prayer and continue to look for ways in which we can support and nurture one another, and those most in need.

Never did I expect to give up so much this Lent, but when we make sacrifices in love and faith, as we are called to at the moment, we trust in God that something greater will always be revealed.