



**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 10 MARCH 2024- MOTHERING SUNDAY**

COLLECT

God of compassion,
whose Son Jesus Christ, the child of Mary,
shared the life of a home in Nazareth,
and on the cross drew the whole human family to himself:
strengthen us in our daily living
that in joy and in sorrow
we may know the power of your presence
to bind together and to heal;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Psalm 34.11-20

- 11 Come, my children, and listen to me; ♦
I will teach you the fear of the Lord.
- 12 Who is there who delights in life ♦
and longs for days to enjoy good things?
- 13 Keep your tongue from evil ♦
and your lips from lying words.
- 14 Turn from evil and do good; ♦
seek peace and pursue it.
- 15 The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous ♦
and his ears are open to their cry.
- 16 The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, ♦
to root out the remembrance of them from the earth.
- 17 The righteous cry and the Lord hears them ♦
and delivers them out of all their troubles.
- 18 The Lord is near to the brokenhearted ♦
and will save those who are crushed in spirit.
- 19 Many are the troubles of the righteous; ♦
from them all will the Lord deliver them.
- 20 He keeps all their bones, ♦
so that not one of them is broken.

1 Samuel 1.20-28

In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, 'I have asked him of the LORD.'

The man Elkanah and all his household went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and to pay his vow. But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, 'As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, that he may appear in the presence of the LORD, and remain there for ever; I will offer him as a nazirite for all time.' Her husband Elkanah said to her, 'Do what seems best to you, wait until you have weaned him; only—may the LORD establish his word.' So the woman remained and nursed her son, until she weaned him. When she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine. She brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh; and the child was young. Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. And she said, 'Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the LORD. For this child I prayed; and the LORD has granted me the petition that I made to him. Therefore I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives, he is given to the LORD.'

At Morning Prayer, the Gospel is simply the second reading, people sit to hear it and is introduced in the same way as the first:

The second reading is from John, chapter 19, verses 25-27.

and then at the end:

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

For Eucharists/ Communion people stand to hear the Gospel and it is introduced with an Acclamation, as below:

Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory.

Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory.

I am the light of the world, says the Lord. Whoever follows me has the light of life.

Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to John 19, verses 25-27.

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

A Reflection from Hannah...

'Mothering' is a task for us all, whoever we are. To love and nurture another life is a huge privilege- whether it's as a literal mother, or as a friend, teacher, godparent, parent figure... we can all think of people to whom we owe a profound debt of gratitude for their mothering of us, and we can all think of people who have looked to us for care and commitment, as the years have gone by.

But it takes courage to 'mother' well. Our readings this week show us the difficult places that love might take us, and the need to be ready to let go when the moment comes. That can be hard. For Hannah to give her much longed-for son over into the care of another- to Eli in the temple- must have taken enormous resolve. And it is pure heartbreak to consider the depth of generous love that moved Christ on the cross to 'give' his mother to another- to think of her in that moment, to ensure that she was looked-after and that the vocation of being part of a family, of belonging, continued. It also helps us to recognise that love is the work of a whole community- and whether that's a family unit or the Church- we are invited to trust that others can share in the task of mothering.

Sadly, extreme examples of letting go in the name of love are still prevalent today. Thousands of families around the world still take the difficult decision to trust their children to others as they send them to safety from places of war and danger. A recent film about the *Kindertransport* in the Second World War is a moving account of the lengths people are sometimes driven to, to give their loved ones the best chance of life. The number of refugee children seeking asylum here is a sobering reminder that love still moves people to risk and to trust their beloved to the unknown.

So yes, we thank one another this Mothering Sunday- we come before God with deep gratitude for those who helped to make us the people we are and showed us how to live well. But perhaps we're also challenged to consider our role as Eli or Mary or the disciple at the foot of the cross- all of whom received someone to nurture and love. Eli received Samuel, and Mary and the disciple received one another. And in both cases, they said yes- yes to becoming family, yes to the responsibility, yes to the adventure. Whatever our circumstances, people can still come our way in need of love and care. May we be ready to embrace the call.