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MOTHERING SUNDAY



14 March, 2021

You held me when
I didn't know who you were.

Now let me hold you,
then you will remember
who I am.

Love you Mum!

ALWAYS!

Welcome to Mother's Day in the UK

rooted in Mothering Sunday in the past!

**Mother's Day is a celebration to
honour the Mother of the family,
Motherhood,
Maternal bonds,
and the influence of mothers in society.**

**Everyone can celebrate Mother's Day
because**

EVERYONE has a MOTHER!

**Today is a great way to be faithful to the
ONLY one of the Ten Commandments
which has a condition attached to it:**

*“Honour (i.e. respect, obey, care for) your father and your mother,
so that you may live long and prosper
in the land the Lord your God has settled you.”¹*

Exodus 20:12

¹ words and phrases added from various texts to convey a contemporary understanding of this Commandment

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WHEN FINISHED
CLICK THE BROWSER'S BACK BUTTON TO RETURN HERE**

**Listen to this hymn
Centre you thoughts on Christ who calls us to follow Him.**

LISTEN You Raise Me Up

READ A Lament for Peace (from Tearfund's Lent prayers)

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.' (Matthew 5:9)

Let us cry out for peace in a world full of conflict:

Lord Jesus,

Conflict ravages the world. Homes are being shattered. Families are being torn apart. Lives are being destroyed.

Lord, we hurt and cry for peace.

Children are being used as soldiers. Women and girls are being abused. The innocent and vulnerable are being exploited in the name of power.

Lord, on their behalf, we cry for peace.

People are millionaires because they sell bombs that fall on hospitals. An entire industry exists to fuel warfare around the world. Greed, corruption and evil are everywhere.

Lord, to stop injustice, we cry out for peace.

Lord Jesus, you are the prince of peace. You are the light of the world. You are love. Let your kingdom come. Let your kingdom come. Let your kingdom come.

Lord, we cry for the peace of Your Kingdom, on earth as it is Heaven.

by Veena O'Sullivan (Veena oversees Tearfund's work in Asia)

PRAY

Eternal God! As we enter into worship this morning, conscious that this is Mother's Day here in the UK, we are acutely aware of Sarah Everard's mother mourning her untimely death; mothers in Burma and other countries who mourn the death of their children protesting against oppression, for a fair and free world; mothers who look after disabled, infirm and sick children and mothers who gave all they had to look after, feed and teach their children during the lockdown.

Heavenly Father, for the gift of Mothers we give you thanks. Each and all of us has reason to be grateful for our Mothers, without whom we would not be here. For some of us, we enjoyed our Mother's very best; for some of us, our Mothers could not be mother to us. We hold nothing against them Father! As you have forgiven us our wrong, out of your incomparable love, forgive them too we pray; hold nothing against them when they come into your presence. Receive them and grant them a seat at Your eternal table.

In our worship today, may we be mindful of what Your love accomplishes in us, and let Your love be the motivation of all we think, say and do.

In the Name of Jesus who demonstrated Your love in every way. **AMEN.**

HYMN Lord! I Love to Sing Your Praises

READING A Conversation at the Well in Samaria (John 4:1-30)

Now when the Lord found that the Pharisees had heard that "Jesus is making and baptising more disciples than John"—although, in fact, it was not Jesus who did the baptising but his disciples—he left Judea and went off again to Galilee, which meant passing through Samaria. There he came to a little town called Sychar, which is near the historic plot of land that Jacob gave to his son, Joseph, and "Jacob's Spring" was there. Jesus, tired with his journey, sat down beside it, just as he was. The time was about midday. Presently, a Samaritan woman arrived to draw some water.

“Please give me a drink,” Jesus said to her, for his disciples had gone away to the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, *“How can you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?”* (Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

“If you knew what God can give,” Jesus replied, *“and if you knew who it is that said to you, ‘Give me a drink’, I think you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water!”*

“Sir,” said the woman, *“you have nothing to draw water with and this well is deep—where can you get your living water? Are you a greater man than our ancestor, Jacob, who gave us this well, and drank here himself with his family, and his cattle?”*

Jesus said to her, *“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks the water I will give him will never be thirsty again. For my gift will become a spring in the man himself, welling up into eternal life.”*

The woman said, *“Sir, give me this water, so that I may stop being thirsty—and not have to come here to draw water any more!”*

“Go and call your husband and then come back here,” said Jesus to her.

“I haven’t got a husband!” the woman answered. *“You are quite right in saying, ‘I haven’t got a husband’,”* replied Jesus, *“for you have had five husbands and the man you have now is not your husband at all. Yes, you spoke the simple truth when you said that.”*

“Sir,” said the woman again, *“I can see that you are a prophet! Now our ancestors worshipped on this hillside, but you Jews say that Jerusalem is the place where men (people) ought to worship—”*

“Believe me,” returned Jesus, *“the time is coming when worshipping the Father will not be a matter of ‘on this hillside’ or ‘in Jerusalem’. Nowadays you are worshipping with your eyes shut. We Jews are worshipping with our eyes open, for the salvation of mankind is to come from our race. Yet the time is coming, yes, and has already come, when true worshippers will worship in spirit and in*

reality. Indeed, the Father looks for men who will worship him like that. God is spirit, and those who worship him can only worship in spirit and in reality.”

“Of course I know that Messiah is coming,” replied the woman, “you know, the one who is called Christ. When he comes he will make everything plain to us.”

“I am Christ speaking to you now,” said Jesus.

At this point his disciples arrived, and were surprised to find him talking to a woman, but none of them asked, *“What do you want?”* or *“What are you talking to her about?”* So the woman left her water-pot behind and went into the town and began to say to the people, *“Come out and see the man who told me everything I’ve ever done! Can this be ‘Christ?’”* So they left the town and started to come to Jesus.

HYMN **Blessed Assurance**

MESSAGE

Disciple John introduced Jesus through several surprise encounters, starting with those who became Jesus’ first disciples, at a wedding, in the Temple courtyard, and finally, a late night encounter with Jesus.

Chapter 4 sets a very troubling scene, which strangely carries through into the incident by a well in Samaria: *“The Pharisees **heard** Jesus was baptising and making more disciples than John, **though Jesus Himself did not baptise them - His disciples did.**”* Isn’t this happening today: facts are distorted and Truth is sacrificed to create Fake News? Wouldn’t it have been better if the Pharisees would have been told, *“Jesus spoke ... and the disciples baptised them”*? Was there also a need to compare the number supposedly baptised *by* Jesus (actually His disciples!) with the number baptised by John? ²

² The ancient Jewish ritual of ceremonial washing with water (*“baptism”* to us), represented people’s confession of sin and their recognition of the need for the cleansing power of God’s forgiveness, usually done before a priest.

People were stirring the pot, so it was time for Jesus to move out of Judea. John says, Jesus *had to go through Samaria* (4). Jesus' mission was to do His Father's will. Taking a short-cut through Samaria, a route not normally taken by the Jews, the two words *had to* tells us, this was planned by His Father; a divine appointment was scheduled with a Samaritan woman by a well!

There is a long history of acrimony between the Samaritan Jews and Judean Jews. The Samaritans said they were descendants of Joseph, whose sons Manasseh and Ephraim's clans were granted the land to settle in when they entered the land under Joshua in 1250 BCE, and who survived the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Samaria) by the Assyrians in 722 BCE.

History is narrated with many layers: social, linguistic, political, geographical, familial. We will not be able to do justice to the entire narrative during our limited time this morning. Being Mothers' Day in the UK, we shall focus on the "Woman at the Well in Samaria".

Jesus' first personal conversation was with a man of high standing, who visited during the darkest hours of the night. Conditioned by his religious upbringing, Nicodemus did not understand Jesus. **Literalism**, the hallmark of teachers of the law, was his stumbling block.

The second personal conversation Jesus had was with a woman out in the open by a communal well. She too has been conditioned by social and religious practices, and also a victim of literalism.

It remains a mystery why we have caricatured her as a woman of ill-repute. Applying **our** contemporary cultural template and focussing **our** post-modern moral lens, we portray her as a "loose" woman: she came alone during the **heat** of noon day sun to avoid other women who drew water during the cooler hours of the morning and evening (*the text does not inform us of the season, so it might have been winter and cooler*); she admitted to several husbands and presently living with a "boyfriend" (*the text neither states, infers nor alludes to this*). That a Jewish man would talk to a woman was amazing; that he would talk to a

Samaritan woman was unheard of. Yet this woman talked freely with a man she had never met, nor knew.

Being part of a strong clan culture, this woman might have been in a Levirate marriage in which the brother of a deceased man is obliged to marry his brother's widow. It could be she was given, a writ of divorce more than once, because she could not have children. If life dealt her the misfortune of five husbands, a male family member with a family of his own, might have taken her under his care, to provide safety, dignity and well-being, as is practiced in many countries today. The text offers no reference to sexual motives or favours.

Jesus encounters each of us differently. To some by supernatural understanding; others by divine affection; to some by the way of fear, and to another through offered hope. Jesus meets this Samaritan woman by way of her questions and her conscience.

On this day, when we celebrate “Mothering Sunday” in the United Kingdom, an antiquated celebration, now replaced as Mothers’ Day, this Samaritan woman challenges us to think about the conditions under which women live their lives.

1. As schools reopen and children return to classrooms, thank God for Mothers (and fathers, but today is especially devoted to mothers) who home-schooled their children, despite feeling inadequate in their skills and knowledge, with the added burden of frequent feeding on demand!
2. Think about and pray for the many women who are not mothers, those unable to, and those who chose not to. As God comforts them in answer to your prayer, pray each would give thanks for their own mother, their lives and sacrifices they made.
3. Many women live in silent loneliness. The Samaritan woman twice³ repeats, *“He told me everything I ever did!”* Jesus also affirmed her, *You have spoken the Truth (18)*. Pray that women who feel isolated and misunderstood would first discover the person of Christ, and then find someone on whom God’s

³ John 4:29 & 39

“Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, and might; the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord”⁴ rests, to be a Godly Counsellor to them.

4. The first evangelist of the Good News is a woman, and a Samaritan at that! She teaches us that *evangelism* is not about “converting people” (which is the work of the Holy Spirit); evangelism is about inviting others into your journey of discovery, *“come and meet the Messiah I have met!”* Pray that all of us would learn “humble-boldness” from the Samaritan woman, that our encounter with Jesus is so fulfilling, we would not be restrained from inviting people, *Come and meet the Messiah I have come to love!*

The fact that, *people came steaming from the village to see Him (30) and, Many Samaritans from the village believed in Jesus because the woman said, ‘He told me everything I ever did’. When they came out to see Him, they begged Him to stay in their village for two days, long enough for many more to believe (39-41).*

I just love the ending of this episode, for it removes any compulsion for us to do something, for which we may not feel adequately equipped. *The people said to the woman, “Now we believe, not just because of what you told us, but because we have heard Him ourselves. Now we know that He is indeed the Savior of the world.”*

It is so easy to tarnish a person’s reputation, as did people when reporting to the Pharisees that Jesus was baptising more people than Baptist John, when He wasn’t, and as we have done to a woman who clearly had a positive relationship with the people of the village. All it took from her was to invite village folk to join in her journey of discovery, and the Holy Spirit took over!

By the well in Samaria, a local woman meets a travel-weary thirsty man and strikes up a conversation to explore her own understanding of faith matters, which sparked a local revival! Don’t you feel the urge to know Jesus more? Then you can be genuinely enthusiastic in your invitation! **AMEN.**

⁴ Isaiah 11:2-3

PS: Jesus had a heart for the estranged and maligned people of Samaria. In the moments before he ascended to Heaven, He informed His disciples: "*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*" (Acts 1:8)

PRAYER: Please read as poetry if you are not familiar with the tune

Once A Woman Seeking Water

Sung to the tune of BEACH SPRING 8.7.8.7 D ("God Whose Giving Knows No Ending")

Once a woman seeking water at a well not far from home
 Met a thirsty, waiting stranger from a people not her own.
 Would she give a drink of water and respond to human need?
 Could she know the joy and wonder she, the giver, would receive?

She drew water for the thirsty; Jesus offered something more:
 Living water, God's own mercy, love abundant, freely poured.
 One, a blessing for the body; one, a blessing for the soul!
 Both are gifts of our Creator — gifts that help to make us whole.

Still God's people carry water from their wells and mountain streams;
 Still at rivers women gather, sharing labor, sharing dreams.
 Still a cup of water given in a dry and weary place
 Is a blessing overflowing from the fountain of God's grace.

God, we ask your richest favour on the work we seek to do;
 May we gladly share clean water and your living water, too.
 May we see the face of Jesus, and how far your love extends,
 In the ones we call our partners — no more strangers, now our friends.

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HYMN

This Amazing Love

BENEDICTION

God sent His Son into our world to heal and redeem. God encounters us daily through the finished work of His Son on the Cross.

Go now into God's World, as sent by God Himself, to be light and love, healing and hope to all whom you encounter, and invite them to meet the Christ you know.

May God grant you His grace and His peace.

May Jesus the Christ grant you His joy in being a part of God's plan, and

May the Holy Spirit fill you with wisdom and confident authority, to boldly declare the coming Kingdom in which Christ will be King!

AMEN, AMEN and always AMEN!

LISTEN THIS then THIS

*as you make coffee/tea/juice
and indulge in a slice of cake
in celebration of your Mother
and Mothers everywhere!!*