

Park Road Baptist Church 10.00am 22nd March, 2020

'Mother's Day Service' led by Michael Kennelly (service suspended due to Coronavirus)

Psalm 150

Praise the Lord.

Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens;

Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.

Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre,

Praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute,

Praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding symbols.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord.

BPW 40 Fill your hearts with praise and gladness [Tune: Regent Square]

Sing and praise your God and mine!

Great the Lord in love and wisdom,

Might And majesty divine!

He who frames the starry heavens

Knows and names them as they shine.

Praise the Lord, his people, praise him!

Wounded souls his comfort know;

Those who fear him find his mercies,

Peace for pain and joy for woe;

Humble hearts are high exalted,

Human pride and power laid low.

Praise the Lord for times and seasons,

Cloud And sunshine, wind And rain;

Spring to melt the snows of winter

Till the waters flow again;

Grass upon the mountain pastures

Golden valleys thick with grain.

Fill your hearts with joy and gladness,

Peace and plenty crown your days;

Love his laws, declare his judgements,

Walk in all his words and ways;

He the Lord and we his children –

Praise the Lord, all people praise!

Timothy Dudley-Smith (b.1926)

PRAYERS

We thank God for giving us others to share in our lives:

For parents, and the love which brought us to birth.

We praise you, O Lord and bring you thanks today.

For mothers who have cherished And nurtured us:

We praise you, O Lord and bring you thanks today.

For fathers, who have loved and supported us:
We praise you, O Lord and bring you thanks today.

For brothers and sisters, with whom we have shared our home:
We praise you, O Lord and bring you thanks today.

For children and their parents:
We praise you, O Lord and bring you thanks today.

For other relatives and friends who have been with
Us in our hopes and joys and in times of sadness:
We praise you, O Lord and bring you thanks today.

For all who first spoke to us of Jesus,
And have drawn us into the family of our Father in heaven:
We praise you, O Lord and bring you thanks today.

Help us to live as those who belong to one another,
And to you our Father, now and always:
Amen

Loving God, thank you for mums and children and for all the joy of family life. Be with those who are grieving because they have no mother. Be close to those who are struggling because they have no children. Be near to those who are sad because they are far apart from those they love. Let your love be present in every home and help your church to have eyes to see and ears to hear the needs of all who come. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
As we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, And the glory are yours
Now and for ever. Amen**

PRP 85 Jesus put this song into our hearts,

Jesus put this song into hearts.
It's a song of joy no-one can take away.
Jesus put this song into our hearts.

Jesus taught us how to live in harmony.
Jesus taught us how to live in harmony.
Different faces, different races, He made us one.
Jesus taught us how to live in harmony.

Jesus taught us how to be a family.
Jesus taught us how to be a family.
Loving one another with the love that He gives;
Jesus taught us how to be a family.

Jesus turned our sorrow into dancing.
Jesus turned our sorrow into dancing.
Changed our tears of sadness into rivers of joy.
Jesus turned our sorrows into a dance.

Graham Kendrick

Themed Talk: What is Mothering Sunday?



Let me introduce you to my cousin, Eleanor Hibble. She was born in 1856 in Bethnal Green, London, so I never knew her personally. Strictly speaking, Eleanor is my first cousin, twice removed, because her grandfather is my great-great grandfather. When she was about 12 she left home to go into service as did many girls of her generation. She did well and by the time she was 25 she worked in the home of Sybil, Countess Grosvenor in Poole, Dorsetshire. She became a lady's maid in Eaton Hall, Cheshire, the house of the Duke of Westminster, was a children's nurse for the Countess Beauchamp at Madresfield Court, Malvern and for ten years worked in Ireland for Anthony Ashley-Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury. A very full and interesting life, but always, on Mothering Sunday, she would try to get home to see her parents.

Mothering Sunday is celebrated in churches on the fourth Sunday in Lent. Traditionally it is a day when we thank God for the love of our mothers, and we thank them in person for their care for us.

In the UK, the service dates back hundreds of years to the time when people were encouraged once a year to return to their home or 'mother' church or cathedral. There is a small but distinct difference between

Mothering Sunday, And 'Mother's Day', the more commercial celebration.

Mother's Day was instigated in 1914 in the USA as a holiday on the second Sunday in May, as a result of a campaign by Anna Jarvis to recognise the important role of mothers in society following the death of her own mother. Initially the wearing of a white carnation and a proclamation from the House of Representatives honoured mothers. The commercialisation of the day rapidly grew, though Anna Jarvis is known to have taken a stand against this. Mothering Sunday as we know it today in the UK is an evolution of the practice of returning home from domestic service to visit church and family – picking flowers on the way to give to mothers and decorate the church. Constance Smith, who was inspired by Anna Jarvis, campaigned for a revival of Mothering Sunday observance in Lent, writing a booklet 'The Revival of Mothering Sunday' in 1920. This was so influential and widely read that by 1938 it was said that most churches in the UK celebrated Mothering Sunday.

Today, many churches provide small posies of flowers for children in the church to give to their mothers and other carers to thank them. Increasingly, churches are also aware of those for whom Mothering Sunday is a painful time And are including prayers And affirmations of care for children in all its forms, addressing issues of infertility, baby loss, childlessness, child bereavement And parental bereavement, particularly of a mother. We recall with thanks the work of those societies who have cared for children for a long time: Barnardo's, The Children's Society And Spurgeon's to name a few, directly played a caring role in the lives of children And young people. Through partnership with the Church we believe that much can be done to bring 'life in all its fullness' to this country's children and young people.

At this point in our service we would have given daffodils to the ladies in our congregation.

BPW 116 All things bright and beautiful,

[Tune: Royal Oak]

All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all.

Each little flower that opens,
Each little bird that sings,
He made their glowing colours,
He made their tiny wings.

The purple-headed mountain,
The river running by,
The sunset, and the morning
That brightens up the sky:

The cold wind in the winter,
The pleasant summer sun,
The ripe fruit in the garden,
He made them every one.

He gave us eyes to see them,
And lips that we might tell
How great is God almighty,
Who has made all things well.

**Here we would have received our offering and given thanks for that and for our children
And young people, who would then have left for their own department.**

O.T. READING Exodus 2:1-10

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

Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the river bank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to get it. 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.

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

'Yes, go,' she answered. And the girl went and got the baby's mother. 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. 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.'

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Here we share prayers suggested by the Baptist Union for all Baptist Churches.

1. Reflecting on the world-wide situation

Let's continue to pray for all our sisters and brothers across the world who have been, And are continuing to be, affected by COVID-19. We pray that all will know God's overwhelming, steadfast love.

Pray for the countries currently suffering from the greatest outbreaks:

China, Italy, Iran, South Korea, France, Spain, Germany, USA, UK and any others.

2. We pray for those who are particularly fearful at the moment.

Pray for those in our communities who may feel vulnerable and scared. Pray that the love of God might be their peace. That they may know that even in the darkest times God's love brings hope.

3. We pray for the most vulnerable and isolated in our neighbourhoods.

Pray for those who are currently self-isolating in our neighbourhoods. Pray for older people who are concerned about shopping, regular hospital appointments And general day to day contact with other people. Bring to God the regular activities for older and more vulnerable people provided by our churches. Pray for wisdom for church leaders to know how to keep people connected and safe.

4. We pray for the medical staff on the frontline of care,

We pray that they will be sustained physically, emotionally and spiritually in the coming weeks. Pray for medics in our own congregations. We pray that God will be their shield and their strength. We pray for wisdom and insight as to how to support those in our congregations and communities involved in frontline care.

5. Pray for our world leaders and for the leaders in our own country that they will seek the wisdom of God as they make decisions over the coming days.

Pray for physical strength for our leaders.

6. We pray for all those leading the scientific response to COVID-19 across the world.

Pray for the scientists from across the globe as they look for ways to alleviate symptoms and as they seek a vaccine for the future.

7. Pray for all God's people in this time of uncertainty and concern.

That our eternal hope would make an earthly difference. Pray for a sense of calm And clarity as well as strength to face what is ahead. That Christians will be 'beacons of hope' and 'carriers of the message of peace' at this time.

8. Pray for the work of BMS overseas.

Pray for BMS Personnel overseas, our partners and local communities, especially those who are living in countries where the health services and infrastructure might not be adequate to protect a global pandemic.

Pray that God will use His servants to accompany people pastorally and missionally through this valley of uncertainty, fear and even potential death. May we be a people of Hope in encouraging others in the face of crisis to lean on God's sustaining presence and unfailing providence.

9. We pray for others in all parts of our world who daily face the uncertainty of life.

We pray for those caught in war

We pray for those who face hunger today

We pray for those struggling with sickness and ill health because of other diseases, such as malaria.

10. We pray for our own fellowship at Park Road and ask for God's guidance at this particular time. [Own Prayers]

We acknowledge the Lord's sovereignty in and through all things and pray using the words of Paul to the church in Ephesus:

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, And that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and

depth, And to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church And in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:14-21 (NRSV)

N.T. READING Colossians 3.12-17 *As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

BPW 471 *Bind us together, Lord,*

Bind us together

With cords that cannot be broken.

Bind us together, Lord,

Bind us together,

O bind us together with love.

There is only one God,
There is only one King,
There is only one body,
That is why we sing:

Made for the glory of God,
Purchased by his precious Son.
Born with the right to be clean,
For Jesus the victory has won.

You are the family of God,
You are the promise divine,
You are God's chosen desire,
You are the glorious new wine.

B. Gilman

SERMON: 'FAMILY BONDS'

Mother's Day sermon

How many of you have watched the TV programme 'Long Lost Family'? This British television series helps people reunite with long lost family members. Researchers take up the search when the trail has run cold, when the limited information that a person has about the family member they are looking for - a lost sibling, biological parent or biological child - has reached a dead end. Unless we have been in that situation, we cannot really understand the compelling need to establish one's identity, or to realise why a birth mother felt the need to give away her child.

In 1945 some of the newspapers carried the headline 'Baby abandoned on King's Cross Station.' Many years later that child, we'll call her Linda, had grown up And had families of her own. But she still wanted to know WHO SHE WAS – what was her parentage. She did her own research to no avail and eventually contacted a professional genealogist. With the help of DNA this person

approached my wife Pauline as she believed the missing mother was connected with her family. With Pauline's help Linda's mother was identified – but by this time she was dead. Her father had been an American GI and Linda contacted his family in the States. A coincidence was that the mother had lived in the same house in Queen's Walk that my family moved into when we first moved to Peterborough – And the story was that she eloped through the window of the bedroom that I later slept in!

The Bible readings for Mothering Sunday encompass stories of the love of mothers, the joys and anguish of motherhood, and the ways in which the love of God is interpreted through the lens of the love of mothers for their children. In celebrating motherhood, we do well to avoid making it saccharine. Even at its best the love of mothers can be tested to the limit, and not all mothering is received with thanksgiving.

The background to our first reading reminds us of the time when the Hebrews (the people of God) had had positions of fame under Joseph, who had become the Pharaoh's right-hand-man. But as time passed Joseph was forgotten and the Hebrews became a slave nation. However, their numbers had increased so much that the current Pharaoh feared they would rise up in rebellion. To prevent this, he ordered that all Hebrew male babies should be killed. And this is where we come in.

From a human perspective, God's great rescue plan for his people has a fragile beginning. At the heart of the story are three women. The **Hebrew mother** risks her own life to defy the edict of Pharaoh. She needs courage and resourcefulness to protect the child: her skill And care in preparing the basket are all that stand between him and death. Totally committed to his safety, she unselfishly gives up her own claims on him to ensure his future.

The **sister** is in the same mould. The baby is not abandoned to his fate, for she keeps a careful watch and adapts to the situation as it develops, cleverly seizing the opportunity to negotiate for the mother to become the nurse for the child.

The **Egyptian princess** is presented in a very positive light. She too is taking risks, for she knows this is a Hebrew child. Yet she is compassionate – And practical. She also shows longer-term commitment.

Other characters are in the shadows behind the story – Pharaoh, cruel and callous, is duped by shrewd And God-fearing midwives. God is not mentioned but his watchful presence is felt as his plan unfolds through the human drama in which such an important part is played by women.

There are other examples of mothers in scripture. The story of Hannah and Samuel in 1 Samuel 1.20-end enables reflections on the experience of childlessness, of the profound love of a mother for a longed-for son, And of the deep love of a mother again seen in entrusting her child to others. Luke 2.33-35 describes profoundly the agony of mothers who see their children suffer. At the heart of the Gospel is the knowledge that Mary, rejoicing in the knowledge that she has borne the Son of God, sees the love of God for all expressed in her son's suffering And death. On the cross, looking at Mary and John in John 19.25-27, Jesus encourages the deep love of mothers and children to be expressed in other relationships. How might the church express the motherly love of God, and the knowledge of all being the children of God?

We turn to our second reading. There is much high-flown theology and philosophy in Paul's letters. And there are some very simple and practical pictures which help the listener And reader understand the depths of his thought. Take the remarkable image in this reading about clothes. Clothes are every-day And remarkable, they are sensible and outrageous, they are normal and extraordinary. Billy Connolly famously said that there is no such thing as bad weather, only the wrong sort of clothes. In a household it's not just mothers who sort the washing, ironing and putting away, but clothes keep us and protect us, and it feels like a motherly thing to care about what those we love are wearing.

In Colossians Paul uses the image of clothing to describe the depths of what it is to love in a household and a community, And what it is to put that love into practical action. Tom Wright's

translation says that these are the clothes to wear: 'be tender-hearted, kind, humble, meek and ready to put up with anything'. To make the effort to put on the piece of clothing called 'patience', to 'put up with anything' is immensely tough if one of your family misuses alcohol, substances or drugs, like the many families supported by, for example, Spurgeon's or The Children's Society. 'Patience' and 'putting up with anything' hardly describes the deep wells of compassion and sacrifice needed to cope, and to find a way through when a relationship and a household is torn apart with worry and fear and anger.

Paul is keen to tell us that the love of God will protect us, sustain us and warm us, especially in situations where people are under the greatest strain. Our own clothing may be stretched and frayed. The support that we give to those who need it is like a piece of clothing, a practical enfolding in love and care. Paul's prayer is that it will be the love of God which people see when they look at the church. A motherly choice of clothing includes enabling people to love, to forgive, to be patient, to bear with one another. Worn well, such clothing becomes second nature, and like your favourite shoes you hardly know you have them on. Paul invites his hearers to think of what they choose to wear and why. As a body they will express the love of God when they consciously practise it, and when it dwells in them. Is this a picture of our own church?

Paul says to the Colossians that the voice of God, the word of God, must live in them, just as the important lessons from our past continue to live in us and enrich us. God promises to prompt us and teach us, just as our parental advice continues to help us. By reading the Bible, praying, singing God's praise and discussing God's word, God's words live in us and enrich us. Today is a day to hear a voice telling us to choose the right clothes. All too often we think of God as remote and mighty. Here God is motherly and close. Let God clothe you in love and speak to you as you listen to each other. Too many people have a bad experience of love. In learning from their circumstances, we can find other ways where putting on love can change things around. To receive such love is to give it. It will be as practical as choosing the right coat to wear, and as deep as the sacrificial love of Christ, worked out in every interaction and in every place. All of this might sound like clothes for angels rather than for ordinary human beings. As always for Paul, everything depends on Christ.

The **example** (v.13) of Christ inspires us to forgive, realising how much we are forgiven.

The **peace** of Christ (v.15) 'umpires' in our conflicts of motives and principles.

The **word** of Christ (v.10) guides our thinking and makes us sing for joy,

The **name** of Christ (v.17) hallows everything we say and do.

It is so important that we keep these points in mind. We are still the family of God, although we no longer meet together as we have been used to. We live in an age of communication, and as Christians we know the value of the communication of prayer. So I urge you to continue to pray for one another – work through the Church Directory methodically - be aware of your neighbours – pray for our Leadership Team. May God bless and keep us, so that at the end of this trial, whenever that may be, we may still be bonded together with Christ, to whom be the glory.

BPW 472 Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.

[Tune: Dennis]

Before our Father's throne
We pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
Our comforts and our cares.

We share our mutual woes,
Our mutual burdens bear,
And often for each other flows

The sympathizing tear.

When for a while we part,
This thought will soothe our pain,
That we shall still be joined in heart,
And hope to meet again.

This glorious hope revives
Our courage by the way,
While each in expectation lives,
And hopes to see the day.

From sorrow, toil, And pain,
And sin we shall be free;
And perfect love And friendship reign
Through all eternity.

John Fawcett (1740-1817)

BLESSING

May God, who gave birth to all creation, bless us:

May God, who became incarnate by an earthly mother, bless us:

May God, who broods as a mother over her children, bless us.

May almighty God bless us, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen