

Sermon on Sunday 14 March 2021

by Rev. Alan Stewart

Readings: Psalm 91. 4; Matthew 23. 37

Mothering Sunday

Today is both a celebration and a reclamation.

This day we reclaim not only as a day to celebrate mothers, but as a day to celebrate the act of mothering.

To mother is to bring something to birth; from a smile on a face to a confidence within.

To mother is to dream for and to patiently enable the best in others.

To mother is to tend the cuts and bruises of life, to offer a shoulder to cry on, to speak words of reassurance and blessing.

To mother is to hold another secure within a circle of an unconditional love.

To mother, therefore, is not just for mothers. Potentially, mothering is something we're all called to be part of.

So, we reclaim today especially for all for whom today is bittersweet, for all who long and all who have lost.

Today is about *looking back* to our first day, and to those who gave birth to us, fostered or adopted us. To every hand that cradled and carried and nurtured us; we say thank you.

Today is about *looking around* at this community we call church, to those who have mothered our belonging with their welcome, their prayers, their kindness, their encouragement; their challenge. To each who have shown us the face of a Mother God, we say thank you.

Today is about *looking forward* to '**One Day**', in this life or in the next, when we will once again embrace and be embraced by those we love. For that One Day, in hope, we give thanks.

And today is about *looking in*, and asking, in what small way this day might I be called to mother?

In what small way might I bring to birth some joy, some hope, some reassurance, some encouragement?

In what small way might I bless another with my kindness, my full attention, my unconditional acceptance?

In what small way might I offer an ear to listen, an albeit-for-now virtual shoulder to cry on?

In what small way might I enable the best in others, speak life to and put courage into others?

In what small way might I express the Mother love of God?

Because small acts of mothering have an impact and legacy much, much bigger than we will ever know.

There are, as we've already heard, many images within scripture which speak of the mother nature of our God – from the Spirit brooding over the waters at creation to Jesus longing to gather his people like a hen gathers its chicks.

If you have a candle to hand, I'd ask you to light it now. If not, there's one for you on the screen.

We light this light to remember all those who, in times past and present, have mothered us. We light this as a prayer for all who need to know the mother love of God; for all who long and all who have lost.

In a moment, we'll hold each one in silence. Before we do, I'd like to share with you the words of a beautiful song of blessing which, perhaps, we can imagine God singing over us as a mother might sing a lullaby.

*This is to mother you, to comfort you and get you through,
through when your nights are lonely,
through when your dreams are only blue.*

This is to mother you.

*This is to be with you, to hold you and to kiss you, too,
for when you need me, I will do what your own mother didn't do.*

Which is to mother you.

All the pain that you have known, all the violence in your soul.

All the wrong things you have done, I will take from you when I come.

All mistakes made in distress, all your unhappiness,

I will take away with my kiss, yes, I will give you tenderness.

For child I am so glad I found you.

Although my arms have always been around you.

Sweet child, although you did not see me, I saw you.

And I'm here to mother you, to comfort you and get you through.

Through when your nights are lonely,

through when your dreams are only blue.

This is to mother you.

(Sinéad O'Connor)



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