**Mothering Sunday ‘Hand in Hand’**

**Read Exodus 2: 1 - 10**

What do you think must be the hardest thing about being a Mum? It would be interesting to hear how different your responses would be...

What must be the best thing about being a Mum?

Surely for **Jochebed,** the mother of Moses the hardest thing was knowing that to save the life of her baby boy she must trust him to the river Nile in a basket of reeds and that *someone* would hopefully be enchanted by his innocence and vulnerability!

I hope you’ll bear with me as I share my favourite Moses joke...... Who was the first financier in the Bible?

Pharaoh’s daughter, she went to the bank of the Nile and drew out a little prophet!

As Jochebed hid her baby son in a basket in the bulrushes she was desperate for anyway of saving his life from the Egyptian soldiers. It was getting impossible to keep him quiet in the house and she had to take drastic measures.

Linda Wooten wrote ‘ *being a mother is learning about strengths you didn’t know you had and dealing with the fears you didn’t know existed!’*

Jochebed learned that to raise her son she would need to go hand in hand with those around her, those who could help in such a drastic situation even if was the daughter of the enemy.

The Bible does not attempt to sentimentalise or sugar coat what mothering involves, pain and aching, bewildering confusion and times of misunderstanding as well as the joy, the laughter and delight in watching a tiny human being develop and mature, blossom and flourish. Just read John 19: 25a – 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,[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+19%3A+25a+%E2%80%93+27+++++++++++++&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26852a)*] here is your son,”****27****and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.’*

However, we know that this ability to love and care thankfully is not restricted to mum’s only! At the cross Jesus, commits his grieving mother into the care of the disciple he loved, we see a wonderful example of the way we are to care for one another, and not always just for our immediate family members.

In all this mothering and being mothered we can perhaps sense something of God’s mothering or parenting of us. He wants to work hand in hand with us too.....not to dominate or dictate.

He reminds us of where to walk in ways of safety, if we fall over and hurt ourselves he is there to bring comfort and hope, if we go off by ourselves and get in with the wrong crowd or get ourselves lost in bad or unwise behaviour......he comes to search for us until he finds us, calling our name, again and again until we decide to listen and ask to be rescued. Psalm 23 reminds us of this promise.

When we are small, we can’t do our own buttons or tie our laces or dress ourselves. A helpful way to remember that we are all called to look after each other as church family, as mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles .......is to think about helping each other to dress ourselves in the clothes of kindness, forgiveness, patience, compassion, humility and gentleness.....Paul writes in **Colossian 3: 12 – 14** ...

*‘* ***12****Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.****13****Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.****14****And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.’*

The story of Moses’ childhood is a wonderful example of the extended family in action, all demonstrating parental love in different ways and degrees, his sister Miriam hiding and watching in the reeds, Pharaoh’s daughter having compassion on the Hebrew baby she knew should have been put to death and faithful Jochebed, the mother who was reward by God in being asked to raise her own Son in the safe shadow of Pharaohs’ daughter. A bitter sweet reward.

Could a church family care in this way, when like an extended family the members even of differing generations share together in ways which enrich the whole community?

We are already seeing wonderful examples of the communities in which we live reaching out to those who need to self-isolate, those who are vulnerable, the younger people offer to shop or collect medicines for those no longer able to go out. Those who will be happy to make phone calls to keep contact with those struggling with loneliness.

In the weeks ahead can we look at this as an opportunity to get to know some of our neighbours….of course with appropriate social distancing but also to learn what’s important for each other and to care about those things which matter?

It is perhaps putting some who are used to being the helpers into the ‘being helped’ bracket and sometimes if we’re honest , we can get stuck with that. We find it easy to give out caring, but not always to receive it. For those who are asked to isolate, this is your way, your contribution to protecting others around you and you can still phone others who are isolating for a chat. We know it’s not going to be easy, but we are called to share in the sorrows as well as the joys of our friends and those whom we care for, just like our Father in heaven does.

Mothering is rooted in God’s nature, Isaiah 66 v13 Isaiah reminds Israel that God cares for them ‘*as a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you and you will be comforted over Jerusalem.’*

The way he tenderly cares for his people, the way he allows room for exploration, growth, yes and even for making our own mistakes.....but also He knows what it is to see his only Son, weak, vulnerable and at the mercy of the soldiers.

***God loved the world so much that he sent his one and only son so that all who believe in him shall never die, but have eternal life.*** *John 3: 16*

These strange, uncertain and difficult times will give us the opportunity to show God’s love in creative and loving ways, through phone calls, emails, social media, there’s other ways in which we can demonstrate this extended family care. Think of five people you know who are on their own and commit to ring them regularly.

Join in with praying for family, friends, our nation and those who have no support.

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
**Amen.**

**Some Prayers for intercessions…..**

Lord Jesus Christ, you taught us to love our neighbour, and to care for those in need as if we were caring for you. In this time of anxiety, give us strength to comfort the fearful, to tend the sick, and to assure the isolated of our love, and your love, for your name’s sake. **Amen.**

Dear God our Shield and our Defender, guide and protect my neighbour in this time of health emergency; deliver them from all harm and may your love and care ever grow in this place. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

***For hospital staff and medical researchers...***

Gracious God, give skill, sympathy and resilience to all who are caring for the sick, and your wisdom to those searching for a cure. Strengthen them with your Spirit, that through their work many will be restored to health; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

May the wisdom of God lead the doctors, nurses and researchers, and all in the emergency services that they may know God’s protection; and that God will guide the leaders of the nations into the ways of justice and peace. And that the love of Christ will surround us and take away our anxiety and give us His peace. May He hear us and heal us. **Amen**