

## **Mothering Sunday All Age Sermon 06.03.16: Luke 2: 33-35**

Today is Mothering Sunday and although fathers are carers too, we are going to be thinking especially about mothers, because often what women do as carers is overlooked or taken for granted, so this is a day for particularly thinking about women's work as carers and what their care tells us about God's love for us.

When we think about Mothering Sunday, it's important to remember that there are lots of different ways of being a parent or making a family and there are lots of different ways of caring for people. Some families have painful memories about this, so today can be a very hard day for some people.

Even in the Bible, not everyone grows up in the same kind of family.

**What happened to Moses as a baby?** To protect him from being killed by the Pharaoh, his mother put Moses in the bulrushes where he was found and adopted by the Pharaoh's daughter, although his mother found a way to carry on nursing him as an infant.

**What happened to the Prophet Samuel as a child?** His mother took him to the temple, as soon as he was weaned and he was brought up by priests.

So, there are different kinds of ways to be a mother in the Bible and sometimes being a mother can be hard. In our Gospel reading, Mary takes baby Jesus to the Temple and a Holy man called Simeon says that a sword will pierce Mary's heart (Luke 2: 33-35).

**What might Simeon mean when he says this, how can a sword pierce Mary's heart?**

Mary is a mother who will face a lot of pain, watching how the world treats Jesus when he grows up.

So, being a mother is hard work and sometimes it might even be quite painful. Now, as far as we know, Mary didn't have another job apart from being a mother. But in the Bible, women often had other work. Women harvested and wove cloth; they worked as midwives, nurses, or servants. There was even a woman in the Hebrew Scriptures who built a town (1 Chron 7:24) and there were women leaders (Deborah was a prophet, a leader and a judge: Judg ch 4-5). In the New Testament, women were vendors, dyers, deacons, prophets, church leaders and there was at least one woman apostle.

**How many mothers here have got, or used to have another job as well as being a mother? Did your job outside the home have a job description?**

I thought it would be fun to make a **Job description for being a mother**  
The children were singing us some clues earlier.

**Children –what do mothers usually do in families?**

**Children-do you think it might be hard being a mother?**

**Adults: In this job description that we are making for being a mother**

What are the hours like?

How long is the contract of employment, how many years is it for?

When do you stop being a mother?

What are the pay rates for being a mother?

This sounds like a marvellous job opportunity, you do lots of repetitive thankless tasks and once a year, you get paid with a bunch of daffodils!

## **Parents-Is it hard work being a mother?**

**Children-Why would someone want to be a mother?** So it's hard work and there's no pay, is there a good reason why someone might want this job?

We care for people out of love and love is the reward.

Being a mother can be seen as a vocation, or a calling from God. We know Mary was called to be the mother of Jesus. But we don't know much detail about how she did this, because the Gospel writers didn't think Mary's kind of work, the work of being a mother, was very important to write about.

Most people assume that having a vocation is a call to something dramatic. But the vocation to motherhood is a calling to work that mostly takes place in the background of life. A theologian called Janet Soskice (The Kindness of God, 2007, p.23) says that it is often women and therefore mothers, who are especially caught up in the particulars of caring for others. In most places, it is still women who are busy with repetitive activities, all the washing clothes, or wiping noses and other types of caring which don't leave any marks or lasting monuments behind.

A lot of women's work is overlooked and not even thought about, but Soskice talks about how this type of maternal care, for the ordinary necessities of life, shows us something important. These many invisible acts of kindness show us the kind of God we worship, one who pays attention and nurtures us, often in unremarkable, ordinary ways of caring, which gradually build us into the people of God.

We love, because God loves us.

Not everyone here has a mother any more, or is a mother, but when we see women patiently, generously and invisibly caring for others, even if it's not always perfect, we see a picture of how God mothers us. And we can be thankful for that generosity of love that builds us into the people of God.

**Amen**