

## Mothering Sunday 2024

### Exodus 2:1-10

#### Birth and Youth of Moses

2 Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a **Levite woman**.<sup>2</sup> The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him for three months.<sup>3</sup> When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river.<sup>4</sup> **His sister stood at a distance**, to see what would happen to him.<sup>5</sup> The **daughter of Pharaoh** came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent **her maid to bring it**.<sup>6</sup> When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. 'This must be one of the Hebrews' children,' she said.<sup>7</sup> Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?'<sup>8</sup> Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Yes.' So the girl went and called the child's mother.<sup>9</sup> Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages.' So the woman took the child and nursed it.<sup>10</sup> When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, 'because', she said, 'I drew him out<sup>[b]</sup> of the water.'

#### Sermon: Nurture

Mothering Sunday is one of the dates in the church calendar that produces contrasting emotions. There will be those with heavy hearts, perhaps people whose mothers have died, and they are still very much in grief, those who have never had the opportunity to be mothers and those whose experiences of parenthood have not been positive. Others may have had a less than positive experience of their mothers.

On the other hand, others will be rejoicing in being a mother and/or having a wonderful mother. Many people will have great thankfulness as they recall the wonderful nurturing they had in childhood... and how blessed they were to have a 'good start' with love, support, protection and affirmation.

Many may well have a combination of happy and sad emotions. Whatever our experience of mothers I'm sure many of you can relate to these statements...

\* My mother taught me religion.

'You better pray that spot will come out of the carpet.'

\* My mother taught me about logic.

'If you fall out of that swing and break your neck, you're not going to the shops with me.'

\* My mother taught me foresight.

'Make sure you wear clean underwear, in case you're in an accident.'

\* My mother taught me about the science of osmosis.

‘Close your mouth and eat your supper.’

\* My mother taught me about contortionism.

‘Will you look at that dirt on the back of your neck?’

\* My mother taught me humour.

‘When that lawn mower cuts off your toes, don’t come running to me.’

\* My mother taught me how to become an adult.

‘If you don’t eat your vegetables, you’ll never grow up.’

\* My mother taught me genetics.

‘You’re just like your father.’

\* My mother taught me wisdom.

‘When you get to be my age, you’ll understand.’

\* My mother taught me about justice.

‘One day you’ll have kids, and I hope they turn out just like you!’

The Bible readings set for today speak of the virtues and joys of mothering and the trials and pains it may bring.

They also speak of children being raised not just in a home but within a wider community. Mary and Joseph go to the temple (Luke 2) and Simeon plays an important part in the early years story... supporting Mary and Joseph and blessing Jesus.

And then, notice the different characters in the first reading involved in the raising of Moses (Exodus 2). There are 4 mentioned.

Both these bible passages remind us that it takes a whole community to raise a child!  
**... an entire community of people must provide for and interact positively with children for those children to experience and grow in a safe and healthy environment.**

### **Nurturing Church**

Our God is a relational, communal, nurturing God... Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And we are created to be people after God’s own heart... a relational, communal, nurturing people.

The old term ‘Mother Church’ was used to pick up this exact point. As a mother/parent/guardian and a community play an essential part in child development, so Mother Church plays an essential part in our development as children of God. We need to be nurtured in and by a healthy community and we in turn are called to nurture others within a healthy community.

Within the life of the church it is so important and life changing to have a healthy nurturing culture... and such a healthy nurturing culture ... needs to be nurtured.

We all have a part to play in this nurturing... and in this culture.

## **Culture**

Culture can be described as the way we do things around here? E.g. we welcome and speak to those who are new. A wedding couple, a bereaved person, someone just moved into the area. It's part of who we are... part of our DNA. It's just what we do.

I wonder if you have ever nurtured a culture... kefir, yoghurt or sourdough?

You nurture a culture! With something like a yoghurt, the type of culture will affect the thickness, smoothness creaminess and acidity of the yoghurt (apparently).

## **What kind of culture are we trying to nurture in our Christian lives, on our homes and in the church?**

As a Treharne household... are we acidic and unpleasant? Thick? Appealing? Do we have an environment and a culture where we each grow and thrive and reach our full potential?

As Tidenham Parish... are we acidic and unpleasant? Are we appealing? Do we have an environment and a culture where the children of God, the servants of God... in this place are able to grow and reach full potential?

**We all have a part, a responsibility... to nurture a culture of nurture. Our Parish vision sets out things we are trying to nurture and grow.**

**Worship, discipleship, community, mission, vocation...**

## **Specifically...**

### **1. Relationship with God**

The personal... me and God!

Nurturing the life of God within us... like Mary did.

Nurturing a culture in our own individual lives where prayer and Scripture is taken seriously and informs our lives.

A culture of... knowing God's love through Jesus and his presence within us through his Spirit. Fanning the flame of God's presence, mercy and love. To walk humbly with our God and declaring Jesus Christ as Lord...

We nurture the Good News of God in Christ for us and our identity as beloved children of God.

To nurture this requires commitment and some discipline... in prayer and scripture.

Each of us needs a culture of learning and eagerness to do God's will... open to his leading and call, setting aside time and space to allow God to transform us... that as individuals we may be the people God has created us to be.

### **2. Relationship with each other in community – we call it church**

The interpersonal... not just me and God but we and God.

A culture and environment where we come together to nurture our relationship with God in each other.

It's part of who we are as God's beloved children to come together and celebrate the goodness of God revealed in Jesus... to tell HIS story and our stories of what God has done to one another to encourage one another!

A culture where we praise and lament, pray and to seek, laugh and to cry as we walk along the road God has placed us on.

A culture where we fan the flame of God's Spirit in others. Notice what he is doing and fan that flame.

A culture of safeguarding... looking out for the wellbeing of one another... in all aspects of life.

A culture (the way we do things around here)... of one another's. Love one another, forgive one another, encourage one another, pray for one another.

A community with eyes and ears upward, inward and outward. Value of self and others.

A culture of collaboration and interdependence, appreciation, awareness, mercy (eyes of compassion), welcome, hospitality, holding each other to account as we pray and search the Scriptures and ask questions... spurring each other on to live lives of 'whole life worship.'

A culture of learning and an eagerness to do God's will... open to his leading and call within the church, the Body of Christ.

A culture where our children can grow in faith and love, mercy and godliness, where they learn what is good and holy and what is evil and unholy.

A culture where we desire God to transform us... that as a community we may be the people God has created us to be. To be a distinctive holy people...

### **3. Relationship with those in our sphere of influence, outside the gathered church**

The personal and interpersonal becomes the communal...

We want to have a culture that looks to nurture relationship beyond ourselves... To be a distinctive holy people... that engages, that connects, that relates, that cares about our neighbour, our community, our nation, our world, our Universe. That celebrates what God is doing in the world and in other peoples lives, and is prepared to stand up and speak out when and where things are not right and good and lovely. To recognise God at work over and above the church... in daily life, in our communities... walking with others and encouraging others where they are.

We look to build bridges to engage not walls to separate and divide.

To have a culture where we want others to know the Good News of Jesus Christ even though for many Christianity is not 'news' and not seen as 'good.'

To shape the world around us through the Christ within us.

As we remember and celebrate today those who have nurtured us well may we each play our part in shaping and contributing to a healthy culture of nurture within our homes, our worshipping community and wider communities.