

Sermon for Mothering Sunday March 19th 2023 St Johns 9am and Christ the King 10.30.

So today's Bible reading from Luke tells us that Mary and Joseph with the baby Jesus bring him to the temple to Simeon for Mary's purification after child birth and to perform the redemption of the first born in obedience to the law of Moses. To offer a sacrifice of a pair of pigeons as they were poor, rather than two turtle doves or a lamb.

So can you imagine Mary and Joseph's faces when Simeon says he has now seen the Salvation of the world in this tiny baby and now asks God to let his servant depart in peace. But he also tells Mary that a sword will pierce your heart and soul and the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. Then Anna an elderly prophetess offered up prayers and praise to God for Jesus, then spoke to everyone around her about Jesus and his role in the redemption of Israel as is told by Luke 2 verses 36-38.

I wonder what kind of reaction Mary and Joseph would have had to all this? Would Mary feel the need to cuddle Jesus that bit closer to her? Was Joseph fearful of the future of mother and child? Did they walk out of the temple and talk about what had been said about their son? They both knew that their child was the son of God, but this must have stirred them up to wonder what Simeon had seen in Jesus and Anna and the warning to Mary that troubling times lay ahead for Jesus and for herself.

Not the kind of things a new parent wants to hear, yet we don't really know how they took the news, except it seems they say nothing and in silence accept the mysterious words that predict a deeply sorrowful time ahead of them. But their trust was in God who had picked Mary himself to be Jesus' mother and had instructed Joseph how to care for them and lead them to safety out of the hands of Herod.

In Exodus we see Moses been pulled out from the bullrushes in a basket and been raised by his own mother as his nurse maid for the Pharaoh's daughter. The Pharaoh's daughter knew he was a Hebrew but named him Moses and decided to raise him as an Egyptian prince. Moses was not adopted or born as an Egyptian but it seems that God had controlled the precise timing of how Moses was discovered and God recognised the faith of his mother Jochebed that she knew by her son being raised as a prince it was her sacrifice of her son to see that he had life. I don't think she realised that he would one day deliver the nation of Israel from slavery as he had learned and been educated in the ways of the Egyptians.

So both Mary and Jochebed had both been given sons that God had control of their lives. For Jochebed it was knowing that it gave her son a life, a life she couldn't have given him as the

Pharaoh had wanted all the baby boys killed. She put her trust in God and prayed that he would be found by an Egyptian woman. She gave thanks to God when he was found.

Mary of course had already shown her trust and faith in God by carrying the Christ child, when she first said yes to God.

Then there is Miriam, just a child herself, who then decides to sit and watch what happens to her baby brother floating in a basket in some bulrushes on the Nile river where crocodiles swam, and Egyptian guards were patrolling as looking for baby boys that they had been ordered to kill by the Pharaoh. Can you imagine her feelings, as she watched a maid instructed by the Pharaoh's daughter to bring the basket and the baby to her? would she call the soldiers? Would she throw him into the river?

She watched and as it seemed the Princess was taken in by the baby, she knew she had to act quickly, at the cost of being seen talking to an Egyptian woman, yet alone a Pharaoh's daughter. But she runs to her and asks her would she like someone to nurse him, and then goes quickly and fetches her mother.

The Pharaoh's daughter takes him back to the palace and adopts him, she names him Moses which means to pull out or draw out of water. She must have been very brave, going against her father, and also showed she had a good and tender heart to rescue this baby. There is no mention of what she told anyone of where this baby came from, how she persuaded her father to let her keep him, but I believe God was there alongside her and with Moses also, as was it by any coincidence that Moses was found just where the princess would come down to bathe? That the soldiers were not around to see the basket floating on the river? Or that. no hungry crocodiles were looking for a meal as a lot of the Hebrew boy babies were thrown into the river.

But what if Mary had said No to God ? Or Jochebed had not been able to hide her baby boy? Or Miriam didn't stay to watch what happened to her brother? What if the princess chucked him aside into the river? But they all had such faith in God. If they hadn't, things might have been very different today and we might not be celebrating Mothers, especially faithful, strong mothers that were around a long time before us, living lives, even different from each other also in different times.

But it is Mothers Day today and I always think it is a strange day to celebrate, as it can cause such a lot of heartache simply by its title, as so many woman have problems in becoming mothers, there are those who have lost babies and children, then there are those who feel pressured into having a baby when it really doesn't feel the right for them, to just really not wanting to be a mother. Then there are the fathers who have become mothers, adopted mothers, people who care for everyone just like mothers, surrogate mothers, the list is endless.

I am a mother and I remember holding my new born babies and marvelling at just how perfect they were and thanking God for them. I remember people all saying the same kinds of things when having a cuddle with my new borns. Now I look at my grandchildren and great grandchildren with the same amazement. I often wonder who they will grow up to be, could I be holding say, a future prime minister, a pop star? But however they grow up, that they know they are loved. So over the years I have celebrated many Mothers Day, pretended not to see the cards the children had made at school as they hurry out with them hidden in their coats or bags, or the bar of chocolate that dad had given them to hide till the day arrived, which when the day arrived was opened up and broken into squares devoured by them!!

The cards with the thank you on messages scrawled on them - everything from washing their socks to making their dinners, even one for singing in the car with them. Then the pictures in which one sees me as stick thin with very long legs and short arms to the next one where I am fat with a tiny head but bright red lips, all thanked for and placed on the sideboard, with such pride.

Mothers are much more than just the one who washes the clothes or cooks the meal, they are everything from being a judge and jury when the children are arguing, a nurse when they are sick, teacher, friend, and oh so much more and also a defender when children are in danger.

If we look at Mary, Jochebed, Miriam and the Princess mentioned in our readings today, we can see all the same nurturing natures that makes a mother. As we are in Lent and getting ever closer to the day when Jesus takes the sins of the whole world upon himself and dies on that cross in pain and agony, Mary his mother must be now fully understanding what it meant to be his mother. Just like all mothers her heart was breaking as she watched her son die. But Mary's yes to the Angel and really to God not knowing how difficult things would be, yet she knew this also had to be the reason she did say yes, as her son was going to redeem all of mankind. This brings us to examine ourselves, to see where we should say yes to God and even think about how things could have been if Mary had said no, but she didn't she said Yes and let thy will be done according to your word. So today think of Mary and like her think where you can say your yes to God and Jesus.

I will just say a simple prayer now for mothers everywhere,

Lord, we thank you for mothers. Thank you for placing them in our lives, for the blessings that they bring to the family. We pray for the mothers to be and for new mothers just starting out, for the mothers who are nearing the end of their earthly lives and for those mothers who have loved us, that we see no more. We pray for those struggling on this Mothers Day too and ask that you comfort them. Thank you for all the mothers mentioned in the Bible and we ask for your blessings upon us all; in Jesus' name Amen.

I wish you all a day of celebration and happy Mothers Day.