

## **Kingswood March 14<sup>th</sup> 2021 Mothering Sunday 'separation and hope of reuniting'**

Welcome to worship with Kingswood this Mothering Sunday; a day when children are encouraged to show some kind of appreciation of their Mum, making a card or a gift, or bringing her breakfast in bed. But for some it is a time of remembering a mother who is no longer here – and the separation still causes pain. There is joy in motherhood and there is anguish – today we bring all these emotions to our Creator God who is Mother as well as Father to all, whether people acknowledge it or not. God also knows the joy and the pain involved in creating offspring and reaches out in unconditional love. And so we respond to our loving God in worship.

### **StF 119 God of Eve and God of Mary**

#### *Prayer of thanks*

Isaiah wrote that God is a mother to us, comforting and carrying us in her arms. 'As one whom a mother comforts, so I will comfort you' (Isaiah 66.13).

#### **Loving Lord, thank you for your tender care.**

Isaiah also wrote that God would never forget us. He knows each of us, like a mother knows her own children.

'Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should have no compassion on the child of her womb?

Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you' (Isaiah 49.15).

#### **Loving Lord, thank you for your tender care.**

David wrote that in God's presence, he was quiet and at peace, trusting his mother God like a child safe in loving arms.

'But I have calmed and quieted my soul like a child quieted at its mother's breast; like a child that is quiet is my soul' (Psalm 131.2).

#### **Loving Lord, thank you for your tender care.**

Jesus spoke of himself as a mother, longing to wrap his arms around us, like a mother hen gathers her chicks under her wings.

'How often would I have gathered your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her

wings and you would not' (Matthew 23.37).

**Loving Lord, thank you for your tender care.**

Paul writes about his missionary ministry and likens his work to that of a nurse who looks after those in her care.

'I was gentle among you like a nurse taking care of her children' (1 Thessalonians 2.7).

**Loving Lord, thank you for your tender care.**

### *Readings*

Ephesians 2:1-10

John 3:14-21

### **Message**

Those two readings for this third Sunday in Lent both describe a gift. We often give gifts to celebrate special days.

Many gifts will be exchanged today, expressions of love for a Mother. Some Mums of course will be disappointed though because either their expectations of a show of love weren't met, or because frankly the broken relationship between them and their offspring has caused a separation between them that has become too wide to easily bridge with a bunch of flowers.

But both Paul and John wrote in our readings of a gift given that *is* able to reunite. And though it primarily reunites people with their heavenly Parent, this unity can lead to an end to the pain of other kinds of separation too.

Separation has become a reality for many more people than ever before – separation from elderly relatives in care homes, separation of grandparents from grandchildren and this week a new separation as children went back to school – we saw a small girl crying at the school gate as her Mum left, and I know of Mums, though glad to finish home schooling, missing their kids terribly. Saddest of all though, on this day many will be remembering their own mothers, wives or children from whom they are separated by death.

We know that the pain of separation is greater when it is from those we love the most.

Words in John's gospel assure us that God loved the world *so much* that he gave...a gift.

Despite God's pain of separation from a world so wrapped up in its own selfishness that it forgets to show its love and thanks, God has no expectation of receiving a gift,

rather God gives a gift to us. And in God's power to give, even to those who are still wronging their loving Parent, we discover grace.

Both Bible readings gave us a picture of a life-giving ray of light piercing the darkness of broken relationship and separation. The light of Jesus coming to show us that God loves us.

While still separated from God by our own selfishness we are saved. Saved from the prospect of eternal separation from all that is good. God reaches out to us. Paul says God seats us next to Christ. You can't get much closer to God than that! You just need to believe this grace of God and you will know him near again. I say again because we first came from God. And within all people is an inbuilt hope of being reunited with our Creator. Just like the hope we have of being reunited with all who we are separated from.

How does grace transform our reuniting?

Mums and kids reunited after the first day of school, not the time to shout at each other but to hug.

Relatives separated by distance and social distancing – hoping that the steps out of lock down go to plan so they can meet again. Will they too remember to forget their differences and show their love even though they know they will probably still upset or annoy each other?

And for those who have been separated by death from mothers or children or other loved ones– does it help you to know that through the gift of Jesus' resurrection from death we not only have an example of death being overcome giving us hope of meeting again one day, but also the gift of peace in the waiting for that day that comes from Jesus' presence with us each and every day until we are reunited again.

I pray that you can receive the gift today of God's love for you, and that it will help you in all your hopes of being reunited.

**Amen.**

## **StF 655 We cannot measure how you heal**

### ***Prayers of intercession***

Loving God of the ages,

like a mother you brought the world to birth,

and we rejoice that we are part of that creation.

Help us to care for your earth in all its complex beauty,

and to nurture our children's generation in that sacred duty.

You offer us life in abundance.

**Help us to live as your children.**

In the squabbles and struggles between your peoples,  
some are neglected, some suffer, some die.

Grant us the will to overcome hatred,  
to reach out to the poor and the victim.

You offer us life in abundance.

**Help us to live as your children.**

We remember the mothers around us,  
and the blessings they give to their families,  
and we pray for those who find it hard to cope.

We think of women who seek their fulfilment  
in acts of generosity and service,  
and of all who bring hope to birth in others.

You offer us life in abundance.

**Help us to live as your children.**

We pray for all parents who, like Mary,  
have lost their children before their time.  
Grant your blessing of peace in times of grief,  
your comfort in places of sorrow.

You offer us life in abundance.

**Help us to live as your children.**

God who is mother and father to us,  
receive the prayers we offer  
in the name of Jesus, son of Mary,  
who gave up his life for the sake of your love  
and is alive with you and the Holy Spirit,  
now and for ever.

**Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

**StF 503 Love divine**

*Blessing* May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and for ever. Amen.