

Sermon for Sunday 15 March 2026 (Mothering Sunday)

Margaret Maybury, Ordinand

Exodus 2.1-10; Psalm 34.11-20; 2 Corinthians 1.3-7; John 19.25-27

Good morning. Many of us have roots in places we may or may not have shared with others. We may have life stories of our childhood that we have not shared with others. I recall a local resident talking of the time he became a refugee from the London Blitz. He was an evacuee during the Second World War, moved from his London home to the countryside, taken in by a family of whom he knew nothing. Luckily, his new life was similar to that of Moses, one of rescue, love, and success.

My own late husband was an alien in a foreign land, born within relative humble, very basic beginnings, in the Solomon Isles. His family evacuated to New Zealand and then eventually came to England. Three of the four brothers were born in foreign lands. His beginnings too were one of rescue, his from sickness, threat of harm, and ultimately escaping the massacre of foreigners by the indigenous population. They were cannibals at the time. His family turned to God in a variety of ways, eventually producing a family of vocation.

Moses is the symbol of God's promise. God shows us his strength in the story of Moses. The baby is rescued, nurtured, and delivered from certain death, as under Pharaoh's command all baby boys must be thrown into the River Nile to reduce Israelite numbers. I think he had that wrong somehow, as the population increase was due to the fertile females of the tribes, but luckily at that time, us women, we were saved. But it was not a good way of looking at life.

This was all God's plan, as Moses became an alien, a refugee with a conscience for fairness and justice. He levied his own punishment on a guard maltreating his people. Moses was not without sin. When time was right for God, Moses became the leader of the Israelites, favoured with the sign of the face of God in a burning bush. How amazing that must have been. The lighted bush was a light through the darkness of repression of the Israelites and the forgiveness of sin. From humble and sinful beginnings, Moses became a name we, as Christians, remember.

The similarities of Moses within the life of Jesus are many. Mary and Joseph, the young parents, were aliens in a foreign country when he was born. Born in poverty in a possibly ramshackle stable with no human support that we are aware of. Amongst the animals, the heat, the smells of rural life, it must have been a very humble, smelly beginning. Were there clothes for a baby as we would know them? We sing at Christmas, wrapped in swaddling clothes. Were

they rags or torn layers of his mother's clothing? From these humble beginnings, Jesus and his parents fled from one country to another. Fleeing from the threat of death as Moses was hidden from a similar fate. Jesus at his baptism was rewarded by the call of God, 'This is my Son with whom I am well pleased,' a spoken covenant between God and Jesus, just as Moses had the covenant from God who declared, 'I will be with you when he was sent to rescue God's people.

The message of rescue, love, and support is mirrored in each other's lives. It appears the story of Moses in the bulrushes has little to do with Mothering Sunday, but faith pulls through the idea of God as compassionate, caring, healing, sustaining, nurturing, forgiving, and educating, which are the qualities of a mother or mother figure, and the qualities of our Mother Church, where we began our journey of faith. An African proverb highlights the idea it takes a village to raise a child, as support from others helps the child's development. Those qualities we see in God. Our church here can give those sustaining qualities too - mothering, sustaining, leading, guiding, raising anyone who turns to Christ. We have young people here today. What can we do to help raise them?

Mothers are often recognised for their sacrifices, putting on hold perhaps careers, dreams, travel, for example, whilst raising their children. Mothers hold courage too. They sacrifice and they trust, just as Moses's mother did with Pharaoh's daughter. She trusted Pharaoh's daughter to rescue and raise her precious child, as God did of Mary, trusting her to raise his precious Son, Jesus. One of the biggest trials for mothers is to let their children go out into the big wide world. Independence is a lesson of sacrifice for all who care and love, and so it must be for God too.

In Moses' story, the imagery of the baby in the homemade cradle adrift on the water is a metaphor for our faith in God. We may at times be adrift, floundering in the water of our faith, floating around waiting for rescue, awaiting rescue towards the love and security of God.

Mothering Sunday, which we celebrate today, has been a little hijacked over the last decades by the American idea of Mother's Day. Its inception having several dates ranging from the late 19th century to the early 20th century to post-Second World War. Take your pick. Consumerism has overtaken the religious view of Mothering Sunday. Many adults this morning will have wakened today to noisy whispers, jammy offerings, and cards drawn with love, as children remember those who nurtured them. Happy memories return to me of tea made with cold water - yes, it was as disgusting as it sounds - and enough toast to sink a ship, and the crumbs too, and I hate crumbs in a bed. This can, of course, be parents, but also grandparents, guardians, or official carers, those who protect, care, and guide our young people. Mothers, or those with mother traits, are treasured on this day.

Our thoughts turn to many memories and to what the day will bring. History recalls the tales of servants from the big house being given a day off to return to their mother church. Those servants on their way picked wildflowers, usually violets and daffodils. And this reminds me, my two eldest sons always picked the double flowering daffodils from the orchard. Nothing was ever bought. These servants managed to make a visit to their mothers too. Many servants were given the opportunity for a rich cake gift too, in which marzipan was used, a traditional simnel cake.

For some of us, Mothering Sunday often brings mixed feelings. Feelings of loss, sorrow, anxiety may swell in our hearts. But we must remember as church we are here for all, and our hearts, minds, and indeed arms, if needed, are open to our neighbour. We are as mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters to each other. I haven't spoken of couples, but couples too within a marriage are as mother to each other, caring, loving, supporting each other through life, faith, illness, and sometimes death.

Today is one of those days we recall our roots. Mothering Sunday calls us to remember our Mother Church, our roots, and the love and the qualities of our, of our Mother. Today is one of those days we recall our roots. Mothering Sunday calls us to remember our Mother Church, our roots, and the love of God who accepts our humble beginnings and nurtures us.

Returning to my storey of the evacuee, God brings us to safety from places we find ourselves, often through circumstance. Belief, faith, and the ability to listen to the word of God will secure our safety as he did for Moses and his mother. God as mother is a powerful image. He provides the tools or toys— we have children here - to enable us to achieve our potential.

However you choose to spend Mothering Sunday, I wish you a very happy day. May God be with you and those you love and who love you, today and always. Amen.