

# Parish of St. Thomas, Apostle & Martyr, Ipswich

## Mothering Sunday - 14th March 2021

### Collect:

God of compassion, whose Son Jesus Christ, the child of Mary, shared the life of a home in Nazareth, and on the cross drew the whole human family to himself: strengthen us in our daily living that in joy and in sorrow we may know the power of your presence to bind together and to heal; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**Amen.**

### Psalm 34.11-20

11 Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

12 Which of you desires life, and covets many days to enjoy good?

13 Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit.

14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

15 The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry.

16 The face of the Lord is against evildoers, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.



17 When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears, and rescues them from all their troubles.

18 The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit.

19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord rescues them from them all.

20 He keeps all their bones; not one of them will be broken.

### A reading from the letter to the Colossians (3.12-17)

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.**

### Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John (19.25b-27)

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

**This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, o Christ.**

## Reflection:

Who is my mother? (Matt 12:48). This is Jesus' response when he is told his mother and brothers are outside, presumably outside the courtyard where he was engaging with a crowd of people, and they wanted to speak with him. His response, "who are my mother and my brothers and sisters?" seems harsh. We would certainly not put up with that sort of reply if we were wanting to speak to one of our children! But as so many of Jesus' responses do in Scripture, his reply was meant to open something up, open up a much broader understanding.

His mother and brothers and sisters, he replied, are those who do the will of his heavenly Father. So suddenly his family is more than just his immediate kin. His family is more than the household he grew up in. And in his answer we, along with all his disciples and followers, we find ourselves counted, dare we imagine it, counted as his mother, his brothers and sisters – his kin, his family.

We rightly focus on mothers, grandmothers, our own mothers, all those who are mothers, on Mothering Sunday (and please don't call it Mother's Day!). We focus on the gifts of mothering, and we identify kindness, compassion, nurturing, being-there-for-us-come-what-may, being reliable, being understanding, empathetic – a whole range of qualities that we might associate with being a good mother, and we can identify those even if our own experience of mothering was not so good – we know what it could be like. And we celebrate those gifts and qualities and celebrate those who live out those gifts and qualities. And often that is our mothers, or mothers we know, but it can also be fathers, friends, people who care for us.

And Jesus in that little scene in the courtyard expands who we think of as mothers – and brothers and sisters for that matter. He expands who we think of as those who share in that deep care for another person, for you and me, and for those whom we care for in our mothering. But he does more than that. He shows us much more than that, much more than creating a vast extended family – a family we know as the church, where we are called to be mother and brother and sister to each other, as part of his kin, a family we know of as St Thomas' where we are mother and brother and sister to each other.

Listen to the Gospel reading – listen to what is happening. It is a reading that takes us straight to Good Friday. Jesus is dying on the cross. There seem to be three women, including Jesus' mother, and one man, whom John's Gospel refers to as the "beloved disciple" and we usually take to mean John. And Jesus sees Mary and John and says, "Woman, here is your son." And to John, "Here is your mother." And then we hear that from that moment John takes Mary in and takes care of her.

Who is your mother? Well in this scene, even though Jesus describes her as becoming John's mother, it is not her who cares for John, but him who cares for her. Surely, he is becoming the mother, just as many of us find that we become parents to our parents. But something else is happening. Who is really taking care in this scene, who is looking out for, who is showing compassion? It is the dying Jesus. He is the one who is caring for both his mother and the disciple whom he loved. Jesus is the mother.

The late 14th Century mystic Julian of Norwich, wrote this as she reflected on her spiritual visions of Christ:

"The mother can give her child to suck of her milk, but our precious Mother Jesus can feed us with himself, and does, most courteously and most tenderly, with the blessed sacrament, which is the precious food of true life ... This fair lovely word 'mother' is so sweet and so kind in itself that it cannot truly be said of anyone or to anyone except of him and to him who is the true Mother of life and of all things. To the property of motherhood belong nature, love, wisdom, and knowledge, and this is God."

Julian saw what is revealed in this Gospel passage, that these gifts of motherhood that we celebrate in our mothers, and mothers we know, these gifts of motherhood that we are bidden by Jesus to show and share with one another as his "mother and brothers and sisters", these gifts are his gifts to us. This, as Julian says, is God. Tenderness, kindness, being-there-come-what-may, picking us up and dusting us off, feeding, nourishing, cherishing us. All that a mother does. And this is God, who God is and how God is with each of us, the gift that flows from him dying for us, giving his life as a mother for the sake of the world.

- *Bishop Martin*

*Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us access to his grace. The peace of the Lord be always with you.*

**This week's hymn:**

**All our blessings**

*Tune: All things bright and beautiful*

*Words by Ally Barrett*

*All our blessings, all our joys  
With thankful hearts we sing,  
Lord of life and Lord of love,  
Accept the praise we bring.*

For parents and for children,  
For husbands, wives, and friends,  
For those whose care enfolds us  
With love that never ends.

For fellowship and friendship  
We both receive and give,  
For those who've shared our journey  
And taught us how to live.

For all who've shared our sorrow,  
Walked with us in our pain,  
Who've held our hand through darkness  
And showed us light again.

In sacrifice and service  
Your love is clearly shown,  
Your outstretched arms embrace us  
to bring us safely home.

**A prayer for the journey of Lent**

Jesus, Lamb of God,  
when you walked this earth  
you did not consider heavenly equality,  
though that was yours to choose,  
but took the role of servant,  
and in humility and obedience  
allowed the rough nails of our sin  
to be hammered into your flesh  
for the sake of our salvation.  
And so it is that we acknowledge you  
as Lord of all, to the glory of God the Father,  
Son and Spirit, Three.  
Amen.

**Please pray for:**

**Those with chronic or long-term illness:** Rosemary, Eric Dickerson, Jenny, Andrew Barfield, Kathy Steele, Andrew, Peggy, Margaret Christian, Natacha, Rex & Jill, Christine, Stephen, Samantha, Jean Dominy

**Those undergoing treatment or currently ill:** Katie, Gloria Elmer, Leslie Bloomfield, Roger Dickerson, Vicky & Matt, Dagmar, Roy

**All who are affected by the Coronavirus** in the UK and around the world: *For all who have lost their jobs due to Covid19; all who are despairing. For all who have lost their lives; the injured, the bereaved. For hospital and health care workers*

**For our government & MPs', and local councillors: for honesty in politics, for wisdom and justice for all.** For refugees across the world & diplomats and peace makers, working to end conflicts

**Those who have recently died, and their families mourning their loss:** Stephen Flewitt, Vincent Lightbody. RIP

**Prayer for our new Priest-in-Charge:**

Lord, give us all wisdom and guidance as the search process goes ahead. We know that you have plans for us as a church - and we trust you. We pray that the right person will be drawn to us, that your Spirit will be at work.

Grant us a vision, Lord, to see what we can achieve, to reach out beyond ourselves, to stretch our capabilities, to increase our sense of purpose, to be sensitive to your presence at all times and listen to your call.

**Amen.**

**Scriptures for our new priest:**

We are hoping for a priest who can aspire to Philippians 2, and offer joy and humility in serving the Lord at St Thomas. To lift up holy hands in prayer (1 Timothy 2: 8) - and to keep hold of the deep truths of the faith (1 Timothy 3:9).

## Notices:

**Electoral Roll:** It is that time of year when we have to do a new Electoral Roll (membership of our church). Please let Alison know if you have changed address, or if you would like to join.

**Thanks:** Marilyn Smith wishes to thank everyone who sent her a birthday card the other week.

**Back in church:** all being well, we will resume in-person services on Palm Sunday, 28th March. Distancing, masks, and our booking system will still be necessary, but we will be able to mark Holy Week in church.

**Faith Stories:** Last week Edith and Chris Fisher shared their faith stories with us in a Faith Story newsletter. On the 21st we will hear from Amanda and Andrea as they share their faith stories at Zoom church, and in another Faith Story newsletter. A very big thank you to them for sharing with us!

**New Vicar Search:** Advertising will begin on the 19th! Rev Jackie is collecting scripture verses / words of encouragement & inspiration for our prayers. Do email anything you'd like to share. [jackie@jbscars.com](mailto:jackie@jbscars.com)

**Bible Basics:** at the moment we are looking at the language and liturgy we use in a Eucharist service, chatting about what the words mean, why we say them, and how the service holds together. It's very informal and conversational, and you are welcome to join at any point! Just email Rev Cat for the Zoom link.

**Prayer for growth!** Please join in this prayer at home:

*"God of Mission, who alone brings growth to your Church, send your Holy Spirit to give vision to our planning, wisdom to our actions and power to our witness. Help your Church here in Ipswich to grow younger, to grow in numbers and to grow leaders; in spiritual commitment to you and in service to our local community. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen."*

## **Pray for members of the St Thomas Congregation**

*Pearl Bird; Margaret & Les Bloomfield; Naomi Bloomfield with Amelia, Lily, Archie & Dylan; Peggy Blyth; Carol Brown; Lyanne Brendt with Aaron & Robert; Keith Brisland & family*



### This Week:

#### **Sunday 14th March**

**10am: Zoom church** - you can join by phone too! Speak to Malcolm or Rev Cat.

#### **Wednesday 17th March**

**10am:** livestreamed Eucharist

#### **Thursday 18th March**

**4pm:** Bible Basics

**7pm:** Alpha

#### **Sunday 21st March**

**6pm:** Youth Group



**12th:** Eleanor Rudge

**18th:** Luke Brueck Seeley

**19th:** Keith Brisland

### Contacts:

Acting Priest-in-charge: Revd Cat Connolly

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Email: [revcatconnolly@gmail.com](mailto:revcatconnolly@gmail.com)

*Cat's day off: Mondays*

Lay Evangelist: Malcolm Gibbs

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Director of Music: Simon Clark BA (Hons) FLCM ARCO

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Church wardens: Roger Elmer m:07810 274586

Stephen Marginson 01473 258791

***If you would like to chat, you could also ring:***

Mary Bullass 625135

Gloria Elmer 745590

Rev Jackie 07962 172639

Revd Pat 464748

Rev Canon Chris 462109

### **Church website:**

<http://stthomasipswich.org.uk/>

**Sunday Worship & other Worship resources on the Church Facebook page:**

<https://www.facebook.com/stthomasipswich/>