

Mothering Sunday

So, who knows what day is it today?

Mothering Sunday,

Mother's Day.

Mothering Sunday has been observed for well over 400 years!

And there are links to a celebration of mothers even further back in time, as far back as 250 years BC.

Meanwhile, Mother's Day started just over 100 years ago in America.

Here in Britain, we put the 2 days – Mothering Sunday and Mothers' Day together.

It's a day when we thank our mums for all they do for us; and when we thank those men and women, who 'mother' us, and care for us.

It is also a day to celebrate family life, a time to thank God for our families, for our homes, and it is a time to thank God for our church and for our church family.

Does anyone know another name for this Sunday, too? Mothering Sunday used to be called Refreshment Sunday – the middle Sunday in Lent.

It was a break from the fasting! Part way between Ash Wednesday and Easter Day.

It is a day when if you have given up or taken on something for Lent, and it's slipped a bit, well today you can be refreshed and then take it back up again for the 2nd half of Lent!

So, back to Mothering Sunday, about 400 years ago, when people were living in villages they would go to their local church, a bit like in the old Hillingdon Village, people would come to this their local church.

But on Mothering Sunday they would go to their nearest big church or cathedral, called the 'Mother Church'. They would come and share Communion together – just as we do.

Then years ago, when people went away from home to work,
they didn't have much time off to go home at Easter.
But on this mid-Lent Sunday,
they were given time off to go back home
to visit their families.

On their way home,
they would pick flowers
to take back to their mums
who were waiting at home for them.

Today, we give our mums a card
or present
or flowers,
and a thank you.

For some people,
today is a very sad day.
Some may be missing their mums
or some may be mums who are missing their children.
Even today, right now,
there are families in our local community who are finding
Mothering Sunday especially painful this year;
those whose Mum died recently

those whose child died recently
those remembering an anniversary around this time.

There are some who
never knew their mums,
or who lost their mum a long time ago.
There are some who wanted to be mums
and longed to have children.
Some who have lost their child or children.

And so, this morning,
we are lighting a special candle,
for all the mums or children that we are missing
and who are no longer with us;
and for all those who find today especially painful.

This is a day when we, as a church family,
stand alongside them and share God's love.

* * *

Reading:-

Colossians 3:12-17

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved,
clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness
and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if
any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord
forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds

them all together in perfect unity. 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

* * *

Thoughts

So how well dressed are we all today?
It is said that clothes say a lot about a person.
Mark Twain said, “Clothes make the man”
and some people give a tremendous amount of attention to what they wear and what is in fashion.

Now I am sure that you are all well-dressed this morning.
But the Bible reading is not really about what we wear in regard to the best dress or suit,
or about following the latest fashions.

As we just read in our passage today,
in Paul’s letter to the Colossians,
we are told to clothe ourselves with certain virtues.

It is a ‘putting on’ in a similar way to getting dressed.
Getting dressed is something we are used to doing each day.
But we need to clothe ourselves in this spiritual way, too.

We are to put on compassion,
kindness,
humility,
gentleness
and patience. .

When others look at us,
do they see compassion,
or kindness,
or humility,
or gentleness,
or patience?

What is it of us that they see first?

In other words,
the way we are and the way we act
should be what people see first

We should be so wrapped up
and clothed in these virtues,

and then over all these
wrapped in love.

It is like wrapping a big scarf or shawl of love
as another layer over what we are wearing.

Do others see the love of God
wrapped around you
and radiating from you?

Love is the very essence and character of God.

Recently, social media was full of photos from World
Book Day,
and many children and teachers dressed as characters
from books!

I know that some of you were dressed up.

Each year, I love to see the photos of the different
costumes and see if I can recognise the character from
what is being worn.

I also remember many a late-night sewing to make
character costumes for our 3 daughters,
trying to make something whilst trying to show who or
what the character was.

But what about us,

is our character shown in how we are clothed?

Here in the Bible, we have some instructions
on what we should dress or clothe ourselves in!

We know the instructions are for us,
as it says,
'Therefore,
as God's chosen people,
holy and dearly loved'
– what powerful words.

That's you, and me. This is us!

I don't know if any of you have seen the programme
'This Is Us'.

It is about a family.

They are all different, have their strengths, weaknesses,
and faults.

But the core of it is their love for each other.

The main character is the Dad, Jack.

He is an amazing father.

It is an extended family, they have welcomed others in,
one of the children in it was adopted, another has been
fostered.

They have faced many struggles, and they have
suffered loss and bereavement.

But there is a great sense of belonging,

of unity, of being there for each other,
and of being family.

Well, this is us!

We are all part of an even more amazing family,
with an even more amazing father,
who has even more amazing love for his family,
for each and every one of us.

We are each adopted into God's family,
and we are loved,
completely loved.

In verse 12,
Paul describes what the followers of Jesus must wear,
or clothe themselves in.

It is like getting clothes from our heavenly wardrobe,
like putting on our spiritual uniform.

Do any of you wear a uniform for school or for work?

When we lived in Leicestershire, our girls had a very
casual, in fact 2 of them had a non-existent school
uniform, so it was quite a shock when we moved to
Bracknell and they then had to wear a very strict and
quite old fashioned uniform!

But there is something about a school uniform;
it shows what school you belong to.

There is a unity in wearing a uniform.

With the school emblem on your blazer pocket
or jumper, a school tie.

Each part of the uniform added together
gives a picture of the whole.

When we are out and about, and we see someone in
uniform,

we see the colour of their uniform,
their school badge, their tie,

and we know that they belong to a certain school.

And so for us, this passage tells us about a uniform that
we have,

and how we should be clothed;
what we should put on and wear.

Each day we are to clothe ourselves
with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and
patience.

When a child first starts school, they usually need help
doing up their shirt top button, putting on their tie.

And just like a small child,

we are not left to struggle and to dress ourselves.

God, our loving Father, helps us.
He helps us put on and clothe ourselves in the various attributes.

As we grow in faith, hopefully it is easier to clothe ourselves in these virtues.

Now, uniforms get dirty, and need to be cleaned.
They get ripped and buttons come off.

Uniforms get outgrown.

Uniforms need to be cleaned and renewed.

And God cleans us and renews us.

When things are damaged or messed up,
he helps us to start again.

He helps us to be dressed and clothed in these attributes.

When we are clothed in this way,
wearing our God given uniform,
others can see where we belong.

There is also something about us wearing a uniform,
that also gives us a sense of belonging.

And there is a daily 'putting on' of compassion,
of kindness, of humility, of gentleness and of patience.

A daily practice of wrapping around us God's love
and asking Jesus to fill us with his peace.

By prayer, as we dress in this way each day,
it starts to become a habit.

It is said to take 21 days of doing something for it to
become a habit and 66 days for it to become automatic.

The older children at school don't need help with their
top button or their tie.

They can easily put on their uniform.

It is something they are used to doing.

At the start of the new school year, the year 7s wear
their new uniform that is often a bit big on them.

At first, it's a bit awkward for them putting on the new
uniform.

But when they arrive at school,

there are many others, not just new like them,

but others who have been belonging to the school for
longer.

For them, their uniform fits and is worn in.

They are already so used to putting on their uniform
each day that they don't need to think about each layer.

The more we clothe ourselves in compassion,
in kindness, in humility, in gentleness and in patience,
the more it becomes who we are,
who we identify ourselves with.

Others see how we are clothed in these things.
They recognise our uniform
and they recognise that we belong to God.

And just as the uniform identifies our belonging,
so does love.
Love is like the school badge.
As we put on love, as we wear the love of God,
it binds us together in unity and in belonging.

Unity and uniform come from the same root.
Unity from the Latin word, '*unus*' meaning 'one',
and 'uniform' comes from a combination of two Latin
words, '*unus*' and '*forma*', which means 'one form'.

Unity is being together or
at one with someone or something.
It's the opposite of being divided.
It is togetherness, a oneness.

The Hebrew understanding of unity, is

a oneness as being part of a community.

Unity is strength.

We have that strength as we come together as church.
We are God's family,
each of us adopted into it,
each of us dearly loved.
We are united in our faith,
there is a sense of belonging in our uniform,
and a sharing of God's love and forgiveness.
We belong together,
and we help, support and love each other.

When I was at school, we had a code of conduct,
a way we had to behave when we were wearing our
school uniform.

We also had school rules.

Do any of you have any school rules?

One rule we had was to walk
on a certain side of the corridor,
and to walk and not run along the corridor.

As we walk through our lives, we can let the peace of
Christ rule in our hearts,
and ask him to show us the way we are to walk.

Heavenly Father,
help me today to live a life of compassion, kindness,
humility, gentleness and patience.
Clothe me and wrap me in your love.
Help me to forgive as you have forgiven me.
Lord Jesus, guide me and show me the way,
and may your peace rule in my heart. Amen