

Mothers Day Talk. Tregear 8.5.2022

2 passages: Exodus 2: 1-10; Hebrews 11: 23- 28

Imagine you were a Jew. And you had been living in Egypt over 3000 years ago. You and all the Jewish people were slaves. Not only that, but the ruler of Egypt, the Pharaoh, is trying to wipe you out. He ordered all the midwives if you help to deliver a male child, kill him straight away. Horrible! How can someone do that? But that's what was happening in Egypt in our Bible reading this morning.

Every male child born was to be killed. We read about Moses' mother, Jochabed, and how she worked out a way to save her baby boy. She was the classic mother, risking all to try and save her child. She could have been killed trying to keep her son from being killed. Mum's are like that aren't they? Mum's should be celebrated. They are pretty special.

So, Why are we celebrating Mothers day? It's not a public holiday. Mothers Day is a very new custom. It was only started in 1907, just over a hundred years ago, by the American Christian Anna Jarvis.

So why are we still celebrating it. Well, for one, the retail industry loves it and promotes it. Poor old Anna Jarvis spent the last 25 years of her life protesting against the commercialization of the Mother's Day that she had created. She clearly lost but, ironically, it meant that Mother's Day has been promoted ever since. But apart from the retailers I can't think of anyone who celebrates Mother's Day because it's a good money spinner. Basically, we celebrate Mother's Day because, deep down, we know that our mothers deserve recognition and gratitude for their

sacrificial service to us. Generally, day by day society ignores mums or puts them down, “Oh she’s just a mother.”

I was a Careers Adviser for a few years at Plumpton High School. I learnt about lots of jobs, but one job that was not there was mothering. And yet it’s the most fulltime job anyone could think of. It’s a 24/7 job. But there’s no pay in it, there’s no honours, there’s no advancement, there’s no career path, there’s no social significance. All the things that we might expect from any job, especially any job as demanding as being a mother. As a Canberra journalist put it. “There’s no career path for housewives, no advances, bonuses or emails of congratulations, well done. There’s no job satisfaction in housewifery at all, except a clean house and a happy husband.” For those men amongst us the idea of a happy husband doesn’t sound too bad, but it’s tough for women isn’t it?! Pregnancy is difficult, childbirth is painful, breastfeeding takes skill and patience; mothering can be tedious and fathers often don’t do their share of the housework. And so we celebrate mother’s day because mothers deserve praise. We can celebrate because we’re all involved. All of us had mothers, we all stop on one day of the year to say thank you; to remember them with gratitude; for the hard selfless work that our mother has done for us and on our behalf.

Mothers are great examples of love, and of grace, generously giving themselves to feed, to shelter, to protect, to love and to provide for their children. There is no unmothering programme – once a mum always a mum. In the Facebook world you can unfriend someone. But in the motherhood world you can’t unchild anyone. That’s not an option.

I know as I say this that for a number of people sitting here this morning Mother’s day is not a happy day. Some of you didn’t have a very loving mum; or mum is no

longer part of your family because of divorce or death. There are the women who would desperately love to have children but they can't; mums who have lost their children or are estranged from their children. And that's hard because mums are meant to be at the very heart of relationships.

God created families with mums and dads; children were to be in families with parents who loved them. But we all know that this is a fallen world. There are many families where there is a real love between family members and for this we can be thankful. But we have to acknowledge that many people, including, I dare say, some of you who are sitting here as I speak, have not experienced that kind of family.

The wonderful truth is that no matter what kind of family experience we have had; no matter what kind of mum we've had, the one who created each one of us desires for us to be part of his family. So much so that he sent his Son into the world, and his Son went willingly and with full knowledge of what lay ahead of him; God sent him to die on a cross so that he might rescue us from the death that we deserved.

Well, this brings us to our readings in the Bible, the story of Moses' mum, Jochabed. She and her husband were classic parents. The Pharaoh at the time was killing all the Jewish boys but she wasn't going to give her boy up to that. She made the basket and hid him in the reeds. She was the classic mother, risking life and all to protect her child. And when the Pharaoh's daughter saw this baby even though he was a Hebrew baby, she took pity on the baby and brought him into the palace. And as we heard in the Bible reading, Moses' sister organised for Moses' mother, Jochabed, to be Moses' wet nurse, and to actually be paid to look after her own child. It's an amazing story of a mother who gives up her son so that he will survive. But he never forgot her because she taught him about his background and he identified himself as a Jew and a follower of the one true God all his life.

It's a great story of undermining authority – if you don't like authority you can't help but enjoy the story of Pharaoh's daughter paying Moses' mum to look after a child that's supposed to be killed. She raised him until he was old enough to be put into Pharaoh's household and became a son of Pharaoh's daughter. It's an extraordinary story and yet it's such an ordinary event. Ordinary because it shows the nature of a mother's love. A love that all around the world mothers have for their children. There's more to having a child for money or pleasure, or safety, for a mother's life is more than materialism. Mothers, like Moses' mother, value life, the life they bring into the world. They value it beyond their money or their safety, even beyond their own life, because, for mothers, life is more than materialism, and Moses learnt this lesson from his mum for he also saw that life was more than money or possessions or comfort or fame or power. For in our second Bible reading from the book of Hebrews in the New Testament, written over a thousand years after Moses was alive, we read that Moses by faith refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He identified himself as a Hebrew, he identified himself with the slaves. So, he gave up wealth and power.

Like mother, like son. Moses was not living for this world only. He saw that there were bigger issues than wealth, there are greater issues than power, there is more to life than success in this world. There is more to life than materialism. And this living for something more than material possessions is profoundly human. For motherhood is part of our created order – we see it in mothers don't we. You mothers will put aside your life for the benefit of others, especially within the family, especially for your own children. This is the role of mothers; this is what we expect of them. And, sadly, sometimes this is what we take for granted about them.

But nothing is more human than a mother caring for her children. Mother's Day reminds us of our debt and obligation of gratitude and of care for our mothers. But, boy it's hard work for mums.

In a very special way, I think, mothers point us to what God is like. For God, who created the whole world, created humans in his image, and made us through mothers. And the character of this creator God is grace and love; the grace and love we see not only in mothers but more especially we see in him sending his own Son into the world to give his life for his people. Moses knew that suffering with God's people was preferable to enjoying the pleasures of the palace. Jesus did more than suffer with God's people; he suffered FOR God's people, literally laying down his life for us.

And so it is in the next chapter of Hebrews that the writer says. ²*Keep your eyes on Jesus, our leader and instructor. He was willing to die a shameful death on the cross because of the joy he knew would be his afterwards; and now he sits in the place of honour by the throne of God.* Jesus, like Moses, like Moses' mother, like other mothers, did not live for himself, but for us, laying down his life, FOR US. God created the idea of mothers.

Motherhood is an expression of God's pattern for life. It's hard, it's difficult; it's costly, sacrificial living for the benefit of others. That is love . That is grace. Jesus gives up his life in order that we might come back into his family – hard, difficult, costly , sacrificial dying for the benefit of others. That is love, that is grace.

Motherhood is so profoundly Christian because it is part of the Creator, in his creation. For mothers, life is more than materialism which is why we should this day, with gratitude, recognise our mother's gift of life for us and not just with our lips, or our presents, but also with our lives. Because she has taught us that there is more to

life than gifts and presents. And on this day and everyday we can recognise, with gratitude, our Saviour Jesus's gift of his life for us. He gives us new birth, he gives us life and he gives us his Spirit to live in us and make us new people.

Let me finish with a quote by a young mother who had 3 young kids of her own.

“Motherhood is sleepless nights spent pacing the floor with a colicky baby, fretting over a feverish toddler, or waiting up for a teenager out too late. It's a crumb-strewn car, mountains of dirty dishes and laundry, and a toilet always left unflushed. It's changing wet or poopy or vomit-strewn sheets at three in the morning; it's taking time to talk about things you're not really interested in. It's doling out medicines and wiping noses when you are sick, too, and wishing for your own mommy to take care of you.

Motherhood is about love, and love means sacrifice. It means laying down our expectations and our rights. It means laying down our lives for the people we love, without regard to what we get in return. When we become parents, we say goodbye to our right to expect a clean car, a relaxing vacation, a peaceful meal, or an unaccompanied trip to the bathroom.”

In other words being a mother means messy – life is full of physical mess with little kids and emotional mess as they get older. I think sometimes people have this idea that they have to clean up their lives for God to be interested in them. That couldn't be further from the truth. God says come to me with all your mess. Let me come into the midst of your mess. Live life with me. Life may still be messy but we live it with God, the parent who never gives up on us; the parent who gave his life for us.