

## Sermon 15th March 2026

Heavenly Father, Thank you for bringing us all together today to praise and worship you. Take my lips and speak through them, take our minds and think through them, take our hearts and set them on fire with love for yourself.

AMEN

Well ladies and gentlemen, here we are, already at the 4th Sunday in Lent, it has more than one name - Laetare Sunday (which is Latin for Rejoice), Rose Sunday when pink vestments are sometimes worn to lessen the harshness of the purple. Refreshment Sunday, that gives us a mid Lent break from the deprivations that we so seem to enjoy inflicting upon ourselves, The Sunday of the five loaves - referring to the feeding of thousands with very little to start with and of course Mothering Sunday

In recent times Mothering Sunday may mean some or all of the following, a sometimes dodgy breakfast in bed,, chocolates, flowers, maybe a gift or a nice lunch out. All very loving and lovingly delivered.

Traditionally Mothering Sunday was a day when servants were allowed a day off to visit their mother church, usually a cathedral or their baptismal church. This offered a chance for a reconnection and nourishment of their faith, a spiritual rebirth if you like. Most often this meant travelling to their home town or village, thus enabling a visit to their family and strengthening neighbourhood connections. Small tokens of flowers or cake were taken along. The cake would most likely be a Simnel cake which can be traced back to medieval times. It was made at a time when the produce of the previous autumn's harvest was running low. It was high in calories and very filling, just the boost that was needed to see you through the last of the harsh winter with a promise of better weather to come. Opinions differ on whether the cake should be consumed on Mothering Sunday or at Easter, so, ever resourceful and not wishing to offend anyone and not willing to pass up the chance to have cake we here at HT have 2, one today and one in 3 weeks time, so as it's refreshment Sunday you can safely indulge at coffee time.

But what is today really about, obviously mums, but not exclusively. It's also for anyone who fulfills the role of mothering. Have you ever comforted a child, rejoiced with them, fed them, taught them, cared for them, this is mothering. Are you a trusted adult for them, a favourite aunt, a role model, a loving grandparent always listening and having time for them. Especially for the non

stop questions or bickering, I'm sure we've all got anecdotes, mine include, why are clouds flat on the bottom but curly on the top? What makes water wet? Or from Kathryn whilst on a long road journey - mum he's looking out my window, to which her brother replied - she's breathing my air! Yes, sometimes gritting your teeth and counting to 10 is mothering too.

There are 2 things that every single one of us here has in common, firstly that we all have a biological mother. She may be alive, dead, wonderfully good, or terribly bad or a mix of both. We may have a close or difficult relationship, we may have no idea who she is or was but it is clear that whoever or whatever the circumstances our biological mother gave us the most precious gift of life.

Secondly, we all have a mother church. Again our relationship with her will be different for each of us. Some have grown up with her and have never left, some have grown up with her and drifted away, some may only have just found her, some may find it comforting and a comfortable place, and others a bit more of a challenge.

Just as there is a difference between an individual human mother and mothering, so there is a difference between an individual church (which will have all manner of failings) and the church of God - Truly our Mother Church.

The church of God has given us another precious gift, - LOVE, because it doesn't matter who or what we are, what has led us here today, what our relationship with the church has been in the past or what it is like today, regardless of all that the Church of God is always here for us. Just take a moment to let that sink in, God's Love and his church are always there for us.

A mother's love, be it biological, step, foster, adoptive, guardian or carer is, I believe, the strongest life giving bond and force in nature, but it comes at a cost. As well as the hugs, the joy and the laughter, a mother gets the slammed doors, the tantrums, the sleepless nights, the sulking, the sneers and the general moodiness, each one poking at the heart but never quite breaking it. Through all of this a mother's love is, or should be, because unlike the love of Jesus it is not perfect, constant, forgiving and unconditional. A mother may not like what you have done but is usually willing to give you a 2nd chance - now does that remind you of anyone? Mothers are universal in hoping that nothing bad ever comes the way of the child, Mary Mother of Jesus didn't have the comfort of hope, she knew that her precious, tiny, helpless, new born son would have a trying life and an awful death, she had

been forewarned by Simeon in the Temple when he said ' A sword will pierce through your soul', I cannot imagine her fear and despair.

All the major faiths are based on love, but as far as I can find, and I'm no theologian so please be kind, it is only Christianity that has its main focus of Jesus and his unfailing true love, given without conditions for you. Even if you haven't acknowledged him yet, he loves you. He knew you before you were born, he knows you now and he will be there for you when you die. Just like the best practices of mothering, he listens, does not judge, helps and guides you, comforts you, rejoices with you. All because he loves you. So make use of him, use him, speak/yell/cry to him, trust him, thank him, search for him - he's never far away, let him come to you, lean on him, he will forgive and welcome you, just like a mum.

So as you enjoy the gifts, the lunch, the flowers and cards, not forgetting the Simnel cake, try to see through the multi billion pound event that is now commonly called mother's day and remember this.

The bible mentions mothers just shy of 300 times, it names 37 mothers, it gives examples of mothering such as the feeding of the 3 & 5000, and the love of Jesus is not just equal but surpasses the amazing love of a mother. Something we should surely all be glad of.

AMEN