

## Mothering Sunday Thought 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020 – Ps 131, Acts 2:42-47

It's strange but perhaps no coincidence that on this day of all days we are called to focus on what in the old days would have been called Mother Church. For that is the root of what we now celebrate as Mothering Sunday. 200 years ago that mother on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent was the church.

In the second half of Lent we increasingly focus on Jesus – today, on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday, it's the body of Christ; next Sunday, it's the suffering of Christ; in two weeks time – Palm Sunday – it's the rule and reign of Christ, who comes into Jerusalem on the least kingly transport possible.

In fact the symbol of our Lent Cross today – a towel – draws all these things together in a wonderful but challenging way. The towel which Jesus uses to wash his disciples' feet reminds us of the costly love which characterises his own kingship, the sufferings he endured on behalf, and our calling as a church – his followers who carry on *his* work, in his name.

Now unless you can manage to footwash from 2m distance, I'm not suggesting this is something literally for at the moment – unless you buy a mop with a decent extension on the handle! But this is a season for us a church to show the kind of costly love which will hold the fabric of our society together. To wash metaphorical feet through phone calls, errands, little displays of thoughtfulness.

**And in the book of Acts we see the church being this kind of church.** The four things which characterise the first and perhaps model church are a devotion to Scripture, prayer, breaking of bread and what the bible calls **koinonia**. Often this word is translated as 'fellowship', which conjures images of awkward conversations after church drinking lukewarm instant coffee out of frosted brown mugs – and maybe that's the one part of church none of us are missing today! – but really the word is much bigger than that. It means oneness, a deep sharing. Sharing of lives, sharing of possessions, sharing of ourselves – and that is something we can all practise, even in these uncertain times. It's not destroyed by our inability to gather at present.

Breaking of bread is one of the misunderstood phrases of the bible. At this stage in Acts 2 it doesn't mean communion as we now practise it. It's the act of eating a meal together – which would always begin with the head of the household breaking the bread. Christians began to use this moment to remember Jesus, which is what led little by little to communion – but its root is the idea of social contact. We may not be able to do this in person at present, but let's take every opportunity to stay in touch, to break bread in whatever ways we can as part of our commitment to each other.

Likewise, the other hallmarks – devotion to Scripture and prayer – are things this current situation gives us more opportunity to develop. I do believe God is calling us a church to use this time to go deeper with him in our personal prayer and devotional lives. Keep doing the jigsaws – but there's only so many jigsaws we can do! Nothing could be more important at the moment than connecting with God – find your favourite chair, close your eyes and invite God to meet you each day.

We will continue to produce resources to help you, but one of the joys of our faith is that we're not limited to meeting God in certain places and certain times. One of my prayers certainly is that our experience of what it means to have universal, intimate access to God's presence would increase massively in this season.

And today **we also think not just of Mother Church but of our mothers too** – and perhaps all those who have cared for us over the years. So often these wonderful people exercise just this kind of costly love, the sort of love that Jesus shows his disciples, and we want to remember that today. For all of you who be with your mums or your children in the same room, let's give thanks for them in whatever ways we can.

I want to close this brief reflection with the image of Psalm 131. Here the writer pictures his relationship with God as being like that of a child with his mother. It is such an intimate picture of a quietened soul, finding peace in the arms of his true parent, God. In these unsettling times, I pray that all of us would find that same closeness with our Creator, that we would seek him with all our heart trust him for the future and know that peace that transcends all understanding.

O Church, put your hope in the Lord, both now and for evermore. Amen.