

30 March 2025 Mothering Sunday Exodus 2:1-10 and Colossians 3:12-17

I have a young friend who is waiting, heart in mouth, for news.

She has applied to adopt a baby and is anxiously waiting; maybe a baby will come this week, or next. Or the week after. She waits humbly, excitedly, apprehensively, helplessly. We can't know the history of that baby, where he or she came from, why he or she can't stay with his or her birth mother, but my friend is just waiting, ready to fill the baby up with love, ready to do whatever she can to fulfil the baby's needs. What commitment! What vulnerability! What merciful, faithful devotion!

A question: does God make himself vulnerable? God, the all-powerful, the all-knowing, the timeless one. Does he make himself vulnerable to our whims, our decisions, our own individual prayerful requests?

It's Mothering Sunday today. Some of us will be going out to lunch, buying or receiving flowers and chocolates, happy to be doted on. Some of us are just delighted to indulge our dear mothers, who have generously, wholeheartedly devoted themselves to bringing us up. Others will be sadly alone, regretting lost opportunities, wishing for another chance with a mother long gone, or a child lost. Perhaps we are relieved that the demands have ceased.

Some will be overjoyed by the anticipation of motherhood (oh, the pleasure in choosing a crib, tiny clothes, a pram?); others will be nonplussed by the fuss today. Never wanted children, happy to be without them; some struggling with the conflicting pressures of blended families.

A meaningful day for everyone.

Another question: what are mothers like?

Proverbs 31:28-29 says Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all." Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

To elaborate: caring, self-sacrificing, loving, forgiving, patient, hard-working, guiding, always wanting the best? The Mother's Day cards certainly suggest that we're all like that. For instance, 'to my mother on Mother's Day. You let me know you love me in so many different ways. You make me feel important with encouragement and praise. You're always there when I need you to comfort and to care. I know I'm in your thoughts your love follows me everywhere. Thank you for all you've done and given so generously. I love you my wonderful mother, you're a heaven-sent blessing to me.'

Still, we all know that mothers come in all shapes and sizes, and our own experience may be mixed!

Let's have a quick look at some mothers in the Bible. There's Hannah who prayed desperate, heartfelt prayers for a baby, and bravely, faithfully, promised him to God. 1 Samuel 1:27-28, "I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord."

There's Naomi, the bereaved mother-in-law, who does her best to look after her two daughters in law. In so doing, she inspires sweet devotion from her daughter in law, Ruth. "Where you go I will go, and where you

stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.”

There's Mary, the obedient girl who accepts God's direction, becomes the mother of Jesus and, in the end, endures the sword to her heart.

So to Jochebed, mother of Moses. This is a story of clever planning in a terrifying situation. Boy babies were to be slaughtered, and she kept him for as long as she dared. She and her daughter, Miriam, took a huge risk in leaving him to be found by, of all people, a daughter of Pharaoh. Had they rehearsed the strategy? Did they *know* that she would be compassionate? Pharaoh's daughter put herself in danger when she adopted him: her father might have been furious if he'd found out. God was watching out for little Moses. God had great plans for him.

In this story, wonderful women whose devotion and obedience to God was rewarded in ways that they could not have dreamed of. Our second reading is a letter. Not directed at women particularly, but everyone. It is instructions on how to behave.

Besides, isn't it just what we expect of the perfect mother? That compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. That spirit of forgiveness. That devotion and gratitude to God. Let's give thanks for our lovely mothers! Even if our experience of mothers has not been idyllic, perhaps there is someone in our lives who has modelled that way of loving and giving. Someone we can give thanks for now, someone we can send a message to, or give a hug, or a box of chocolates even, to say thank you and I love you.

Thinking about my friend, waiting, full of hope, for a baby to adopt. There is another person in our lives that we can look to for compassion, kindness, patience and forgiveness. Another person who is just waiting, full of hope, ready to fill us up with love, ready to do whatever is necessary to make us whole. Prepared to welcome us in, wherever we come from, whatever we've been through and whatever our needs are.

Jesus is here right now, vulnerable, open to our whims, decisions, our prayerful requests, hoping that we will accept his offer of adoption into his magnificent family. Here we are, his earthly family, looking forward to receiving anyone and everyone into this beautiful, if imperfect, blended family, as brother, sister, father, mother, child.

Amen.

Fleur Pelly, 30 March 2025