Sermon by Revd. Kenneth Newport 27th 8th March 201520thMarch 2022 Mothering Sunday

**2 Corinthians 1.3-7; Luke 2.33-35**

Well, we seem to be having some unseasonably good weather for this time of year and what a difference it makes. ‘Mother Nature’, as we so commonly refer to the operations of the natural world, seems to have responded well. Close to my house there is a road where the Rotary Club have planted hundreds, if not a few thousand, daffodils along the edges, and they have all come out this las week or two. And the birds are back in the garden too. A pair of nuthatches have returned for the second year to occupy a nest box I put up … I could to on. With all this evidence of new life at this time of year, it is perhaps unsurprising that Mother’s Day falls when it does. ‘Mother nature’ is seen to be active and it is natural also to think of our own literal mothers, and mothers in general.

**God as Mother**

But there is a link surely between Mothering Sunday, which celebrates our literal birth, and the life which we enjoy in the Church under God. In fact, in the past there was an explicit link. In fact ‘Mothering Sunday’ seems originally to have been about ‘mother church’, and the expectation was that on Mothering Sunday you would return to the Church where you were spiritually born through baptism, and raised through Christian worship. It was only later that the day also took into account the matter of visiting and honouring literal mothers.

When I was thinking about all this (Mothering Sunday, Spring, Daffodils, ‘mother nature, and mother church’), I remembered how, a few years ago I read some children’s poems about mothers. The children wrote thinks like *‘mothers love us, whether we are good or bad’* *or ‘Mothers are there for us and always help us and they will never stop loving us’* and *‘mothers care for us and look after us’*. Actually, what the children wrote sounds also to me rather like those things that we think of when we think of God. God also love us, whether we are good or bad, God is there for us and always helps us and never stops loving us. God cares for us, etc.

**God our Mother**

So where is this all going you may be asking yourself at this point? Well, I do remember several years ago that a major storm blew up over the introduction of an new Methodist worship book. And I was interested to read that one of the main objections to the new service book in the Methodist church was the fact that at one point in the book (and it is only one) God is referred to as ‘our mother’. Now, lets not get into the theology of this at this point, but it seems to me that there are a few places in the Bible where we are encouraged to think of God using the image of motherhood.

I guess the most obvious of these is in Matthew 23.37-39, where Jesus calls to his people saying that God has wished to gather them together, even as a mother hen gathers her chicks under her wings. That’s a good image of God it seems to me – one who calls us and takes us under his/her wing. Think of it. We’ve all probably seen chicks rushing to the mother hen and hiding under her wings and finding there a security and send of belonging. Conjure it up in your mind’s eye. Is it helpful to think of God in that way? It is for me, perhaps also for you. There is also a passage in Deuteronomy (32.11-12) where God is compared to a mother eagle hovering over its nest watching over her young. Again, a good image I suggest as we try to think about the unknowable God.

And the Old Testament passage for this morning, is possibly also useful. The story tells us about how Moses was rescued from the water by Pharoah’s daughter, who in effect became his mother. Now we probably have a very cute picture in our minds of Moses in his basket; I can remember pictures in bible story books I had as a child of little baby Moses smiling up at the one who had opened his basket and peered in; but the reality must actually have been quite unpleasant. Imagine it – a baby in a basket bobbing along in a stream and coming to rest in some rushes. The basket must have been a little wet at least, and cold, and the baby inside must have been terrified. Pharoah’s daughter, Mose’s carer we might say in modern language, certainly helped him out of a very unpleasant and potentially very dangerous situation. Again the image may be helpful to us as we know that God also sometimes helps us out of difficult situations.

So, this Mothering Sunday, as we quite properly remember our mothers and other female carers, perhaps we can also remember God, who, like a mother, is there to help us and love us even if we are bad (as the child’s poem has it)

* Like the mother hen who calls her chicks to come under her wings, God calls us to himself;
* Life the mother eagle hovering over the nest, mindful of her chicks, God watches over us;
* Like the daughter of Pharoah who pulls that cold, hungry, wet, terrified child out of the river, God is there to help us in times of need;
* And as it says of God in Isaiah 66.13 “As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you”

If we do think of God using such images, it seems to me that our picture of God will be enriched by it.

**Amen**