**Sermon for Mothering Sunday**

You couldn’t make it up!! A week last Wednesday our grandson Oliver, who is eight, fell from a low height and broke his left arm in two places. This Wednesday Daniel fell off his scooter and broke his right elbow. They now have one good set of arms between them and will be in plaster when we are at Spring Harvest. I can see the eyes on us now, they can’t be very good grandparents if both their grandchildren are in plaster!! As Nick said, Lucy has spent more time at the hospital this last week or so than she has with him. But that is what happens when you are a mum, you have to expect, and manage, the unexpected.

Mothering Sunday is celebrated on the fourth Sunday of [**Lent**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/holydays/lent_1.shtml).

It is often called Mother’s Day.

It has become a day when children give presents, flowers, and home-made cards to their mothers to show their appreciation of all that they do.

**History of Mothering Sunday**

Today churchgoers in England worship at their nearest parish or 'daughter church' for most Sundays in the year but in the past children often worked away from home from the age of about ten years old.

As so many people worked away it was considered important for people to return to their home or 'mother' church once a year.

It was the return to the 'Mother' church which led to the tradition of children, particularly those working as domestic servants or as apprentices, being given the day off to visit their mother and family.

Inevitably the return to the 'mother' church became an occasion for family reunions.

Some of us have the privilege of being mothers, but I think all mothers will agree that having children brings with it challenges,

joys,

heartaches

and celebrations of every small step that our children take.

As Christians we rely on God and our church family to support us as we bring up our children. For those who bring their children to be baptised part of the service says this:

“As they grow up they will need the help and encouragement of the Christian community, so that they may learn to know God in public worship and private prayer, follow Jesus Christ in the life of faith, serve their neighbour after the example of Christ, and in due course come to confirmation”.

Our Colossians reading talks about positive attitudes that benefit all relationships, and our society today, and are true of families and of the church family. God’s attitude is not one of condemnation that some outside the church seem to believe.

We are told to:

* Clothe ourselves with compassion – we may not have experienced all of the life challenges of children and families in the world today but “there but for the grace of God go I”.

Many of us have had many blessings in our lives, but from a personal perspective I can tell you that life is never all straightforward or easy.

There have been times of real challenge, personally, financially, morally and spiritually. Some of you may have had different challenges but we are all called to be compassionate.

* Clothe ourselves with kindness – Charlie and Sim reminded us about acts of kindness when they were with us.

Please do not underestimate the impact of small acts of kindness.

I remember I walked to school one day when Rebecca was quite small and in the pushchair. I had underestimated how cold it was.

I walked past the house of another mum, and she went inside and brought out a blanket for me to borrow so that Rebecca did not get cold.

I met her again a few months ago, some twenty-three years later, and reminded her of how kind she had been.

She had no memory of the incident but I have never forgotten it.

* Clothe ourselves with humility and meekness–

In today’s world these are not popular attitudes, they are seen as a sign of weakness.

The Latin word humilis is the root of humility and means low,

but Proverbs 11:2 says “when pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom”.

* Clothe ourselves with patience –

Proverbs 19:11 says “a person’s wisdom yields patience;

it is to one’s glory to overlook an offence”. This leads onto Paul’s next advice:

* Forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you.

This can be easier said than done, but in my personal experience it leads to greater blessing. And finally:

* Above all, clothe yourselves with love.

“Clothe yourself” is a deliberate act.

It is something that you actively do.

We are not always naturally compassionate, kind, humble, patient and loving.

It is something that we have to work at.

If we choose to work at it then they bind everything together in perfect harmony.

Our family and community is all the richer for it.

For the church community Paul’s advice is this:

* Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.

This is easier said than done when we can’t see the way ahead, when things seem to be going wrong, when something unexpected happens.

Trusting in Jesus through the difficult and challenging times is hard,

In such situations we, as Christians, have to trust that God is there in the middle of the situation and will walk with us through it.

* Be thankful – we are great at taking our problems to Jesus but we so often forget to say thank you

For the prayers which are answered,

for all the things that go right,

for the blessings which come our way each day,

for the love of our families and friends.

We need to be more thankful.

* Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly – we need to spend time getting to know God’s word and trusting in it.

Paul says: Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him”.

As we go forwards this week, let us ask God to actively clothe us with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience

And let us use these to support and build up each other, our church family and our own families.

Amen.