

LAIRG CHURCH OF SCOTLAND & ROGART (ST CALLANS) CHURCH OF SCOTLAND  
SCO20871 and SCO10035

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> March – Mothering Sunday

**Call to worship**

Today, we are giving thanks to God for the gift of mothers and the mother-like nurture that many people show to others in their lives.

Isaiah wrote that God is a mother to us, comforting and carrying us in her arms: *As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you...* (Isaiah 66:13, NIV1984).

**Loving Lord, thank you for your tender care.**

Isaiah also wrote that God would never forget us. He knows each of us, like a mother knows her own children: *Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!* (Isaiah 49:15, NIV1984).

**Loving Lord, thank you for your tender care.**

David wrote that in God's presence, he was quiet and at peace, trusting his mother God like a child safe in loving arms: *But I have stilled and quietened my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me* (Psalm 131:2, NIV1984).

**Loving Lord, thank you for your tender care.**

Jesus spoke of himself as a mother, longing to wrap his arms around us, like a mother hen gathers her chicks under her wings: *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing* (Matthew 23:37, NIV1984).

**Loving Lord, thank you for your tender care.**

Paul writes about his missionary ministry and likens his work to that of a nurse who looks after those in her care: *...but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children* (1 Thessalonians 2:7, NIV1984).

**Loving Lord, thank you for your tender care.**

**Hymn: Lord Jesus Christ**

Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us  
You are one with us, Mary's Son.  
Cleansing our souls from all their sin  
Pouring your love and goodness in  
Jesus our love for you we sing,  
Living Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ now and every day  
Teach us how to pray, Son Of God.  
You have commanded us to do  
This in remembrance Lord of You

Into our lives, your power breaks through,  
Living Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ, we would come to You  
Live our lives for You, Son of God.  
All your commands we know are true,  
Your many gifts will make us new,  
Into our lives, your power breaks through,  
Living Lord

Patrick Robert Norman Appleford  
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wZoZM6LEeE>

**Opening Prayers**

Wherever we are, we live in God's family.  
When our families are broken by circumstance and pain,  
He reaches out to hold us in His arms, piece by piece  
He makes us whole again,  
and in His love-filled hands we are transformed.

So Lord, help us to build relationships  
in all the corners of our hearts.  
To be like you, to love like you,  
to heal brokenness and restore wholeness  
in families worldwide. Amen

**We say together the Lord's Prayer**

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**Readings:**

**John 19:25-27**

John 19:25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. <sup>26</sup> When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," <sup>27</sup> and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

**Ephesians 3:14-19**

I fall on my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth receives its true name. <sup>16</sup> I ask God from the wealth of his glory to give you power through his Spirit to be strong in your inner selves, <sup>17</sup> and I pray that Christ will make his home in your hearts through faith. I pray that you may have your roots and foundation in love, <sup>18</sup> so that you, together with all God's people, may have the power to understand how broad and long, how high and deep, is Christ's love. <sup>19</sup> Yes, may you come to know his love—although it can never be fully known—and so be completely filled with the very nature of God.

**Reflections on the readings**

Joe phones his mother on Mothering Sunday.

'Mum, how are you?' he asks.

'Not too good,' answers his mother, 'I've been very weak.'

Joe, concerned asks, 'Why are you so weak, mother?'

She says, 'Because I haven't eaten in 23 days'

Joe stammers, 'That's terrible. Why haven't you eaten in 23 days?'

His mother replies, 'Because I didn't want my mouth to be filled with food if you should phone.'

Sometimes relationships can be difficult, and Mothering Sunday may be difficult for some. This includes people whose mother's are no longer alive. Mothers who feel inadequate, worried, & fearful for their children. Mothers who's children have died. People who did not have a good relationship with their mothers. People who live a long way from their mothers or whose families have broken up. And women who would like to have been or who would like to be mothers. We need to be aware of these things and support and pray for these people.

As we look at today's gospel on Mothering Sunday, I would like us to think about Jesus' mother, Mary.

Mothers, have you every wished that your child was better behaved? You might have thought something along the lines of, "If they were better behaved it would make my life easier".

Mary had a perfect son, Jesus, and this caused her problems.

Motherhood was not easy for Mary. When Jesus was born she was young, inexperienced and ostracised because of his conception. Her baby was born far from home in difficult and dangerous surroundings. When she took her son to the temple, only days old, Simeon's prophecy for his future was both ominous and exciting. He prophesied that a sword would pierce her soul. She then lived as a refugee in a foreign land because the King wanted to kill her child. Jesus was different as a child. At 12 year old he stopped behind in Jerusalem to discuss theology.

When he was older and his peers were getting married and having children, which was obligatory, Jesus did not. It could not have been easy for Mary to have Jesus being single and still living at home. His public ministry alienated him from his family as well as the religious leaders. Mary had to learn to put her own feelings to one side to support him in his mission. Finally, she suffered the worst thing that can happen to a mother, she had to watch her son die a long, painful, tortuous death. For a Jew there was no more shameful way to die than to be on a cross. Men were crucified naked, something the Jews found shameful.

But Mary was there. Supporting her son, no doubt with many emotions and thoughts racing around. And there was Jesus.

Jesus was on the cross because humankind couldn't cope with God, so they resorted to violence, murder. Jesus endured the suffering of the cross and was watched by those who loved him.

When we suffer we can concentrate on ourselves. Jesus didn't. Even in pain on the cross he is thinking of others. All those who he died for. But also two people in front of him. He asks Mary to

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adopt John as her son, and John to adopt Mary as his mother. They obeyed and John took Mary into his home. Through Jesus' death new relationships are created.

God has adopted us to be his children and to be part of his new, world wide family. This week I read "The death of Christ is the moment of the birth of the church. Christ enters in to the reality of human suffering and there-by makes life and love possible"

(Through Us, with Us, in Us: Relational Theologies in the 21st Century by Lisa Isherwood p227)

Jesus conquered sin, injustice, violence, hatred and death on the cross through love. This is the foundation upon which his family is built upon.

The church is a family in which we are all to care for one another.

Indeed, there is a sense in which the family of the church is of far greater importance than those nuclear families in which we find ourselves as a result of an accident of birth.

On this Mothering Sunday, when we thank our mothers for all that they have meant to us, let's not forget that there is a wider family to which we belong.

For some Mothering Sunday can be a sad day. If this is how you feel, let me remind you that there is a bigger and more important family to which you belong - a family in which we all can feel ourselves loved and affirmed.

To the members of this new family Jesus said: "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13.34)

Paul writing to the church at Corinth states that in the body of Christ all the members should have "the same concern [care] for one another. If one part of the body suffers, all the other parts suffer with it; if one part is praised, all the other parts share its happiness" (1 Cor 12.25,26)

In this family we are called to care for one another. With our text in mind, let's not forget that this means that we are called to care, for the sick, the bereaved, the young, old and those in between. We are called to care for all, to reflect the love of God that has been poured into our hearts (Romans 5.5).

**Prayers**

Let us pray as God's chosen people, called to love. Mother of all, be with those who need you and assure them of your love.

Mother God, hear our prayer.

We pray for places where families are separated due to conflict, disaster or persecution.

Mother God, hear our prayer.

Where there is hurt, we pray for your forgiveness through your unconditional love, one which sits by quietly and cares without question.

Mother God, hear our prayer.

We seek your gentle touch on those who have had difficult experiences with a parent, and in places where there is anger, bitterness and rebuke.

Mother God, hear our prayer.

We hold before you those struggling to bring up their children alone, as they juggle conflicting demands, needing patience and resilience.

Mother God, hear our prayer.

Reach out in compassion towards those who have lost a child, whatever the circumstances, or because they are unable to have much-wanted children.

Mother God, hear our prayer.

Be present with us all, separated and isolated because of the pandemic, yearning to hold a hand, offer a kiss, give a hug or simply be with someone we love.

Mother God, hear our prayer.

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In word and in deed,  
we pray in the name of Jesus,  
who binds us together in perfect unity. Amen

**Hymn: Brother, sister let me serve you**

Brother, sister, let me serve you;  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to  
let you be my servant too.

I will weep when you are weeping;  
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;  
I will share your joy and sorrow,  
till we've seen this journey through.

We are pilgrims on a journey,  
and companions on the road;  
we are here to help each other  
walk the mile and bear the load.

When we sing to God in heaven,  
we shall find such harmony,  
born of all we've known together  
of Christ's love and agony.

I will hold the Christlight for you  
in the night time of your fear;  
I will hold my hand out to you,  
speak the peace you long to hear.

Brother, sister, let me serve you;  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that may have the grace to  
let you be my servant too.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0JahFRDrSCs>

**Blessing**

May the love of the Father fill our hearts;  
May the love of the Lord Jesus fill our homes;  
And may the grace of the Holy Spirit  
bind us together in love in our families and communities.  
And may the blessing of God be with you,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen