



Highcliffe and Bransgore Methodist Churches

Sunday 14th March 2021 Fourth Sunday of Lent
Mothering Sunday, Diana Middleditch: "Encounters with Jesus – The Samaritan Woman" John 4: 1-26.

Mothering Sunday is a special day in Lent when we consider particularly the importance of birth, nurture, family and our roots. Popular culture has named it "Mothers' Day" but it has its origins and deep Christian significance in those, working away from home, visiting their mother church and families as a part of their Lenten devotion. This day can raise a lot of different emotions, both joy and pain. Memories of mothers no longer with us, mothers who lacked warmth and nurture and thanks for those who have been like a mother to us. Today we remember the mothers who have experienced the deep pain of losing a child, women who were unable to become a mother and the pain of separated families.

Opening words: Today, as in the past, many bunches of flowers will be given in love to mothers and those who have been motherly: bought in shops, picked on the wayside or grown in the garden.

And Jesus said, "Come!"

To all mothers and all children: he said, "Come!"
to the motherless and the childless: he said,
"Come!"

To all who long to be mothered: he said, "Come!
Come unto me all ye who labour and are heavy-
laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,
for I am gentle and humble of heart
and you will find rest for your souls." Matthew 11: 28-29.

Opening Song: All creatures of our God and King

StF 99 Sing/read/pray/proclaim words.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p07cdsw6>

All creatures of our God and King
Lift up your voice and with us sing
O praise Him! Alleluia!

Thou, burning sun with golden beam
Thou, silver moon with softer gleam



O praise Him! O praise Him!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thou rushing wind that art so strong,
ye clouds that sail in heav'n along,
O praise him, alleluia!
Thou rising morn, in praise rejoice,
ye lights of evening, find a voice,
O praise him, O praise him,
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Thou flowing water, pure and clear,
make music for thy Lord to hear,
alleluia, alleluia!
Thou fire so masterful and bright,
that givest man both warmth and light,
O praise him, O praise him, alleluia...

Let all things their Creator bless
And worship Him in humbleness
O praise Him! Alleluia!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son
And praise the Spirit, Three-in-One
O praise Him! O praise Him!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

St Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) translated by William Henry Draper (1855-1933)

Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Lent:

Merciful Lord,
you know our struggle to serve you:
when sin spoils our lives
and overshadows our hearts,
come to our aid,
and turn us back to you again;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen Church of England Common Worship

Opening Prayer:

Lord, thank you for all mothers. For the new ones, who endure sleepless nights with infants in arms. For the busy ones, who juggle the pressures of home and family life. For the steadfast ones, who nurture and care for our special vulnerable children. For the patient ones, who always seek to forgive and engage with their pre-teens. For the persistent ones, who cleverly find new ways to connect with their teens. For the mother aunts, who step in to cradle and care for nieces and nephews. For all grandmas, who love and support their precious grandchildren. For the foster mums that are called to gather and cover the fragile ones. For the Sunday mums who care for our children and lead them in faith. For the mums who give far beyond their own resources, who overcome disability to cherish and love.

Thank you Lord for all our beautiful mothers. Help us to support them and keep them in our prayers. May you bless them now on this their special day. **Amen** www.lords-prayer-words.com

Prayer of Confession:

He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. 1 Peter 2: 24-25 (NIV)

Loving and forgiving God, I confess to You my errors, my pride, my self-reliance and my lack of

love for my sisters and brothers. Your word says I must love You and my neighbour as myself, I am sorry for the times when that does not happen. For the times when my good intentions are not followed by my sacrifice of self. **Father forgive, Christ have mercy.**

For the times when I have made being a Christian a comfortable status, a statement of attendance or belonging instead of a way of living my life for You and helping others to do likewise. Forgive me for the times when I have not been a good witness to others. **Father forgive, Christ have mercy.**

For the times when I have believed that salvation is something to be achieved, a rule to be kept, a meeting to be attended or a hurdle to be jumped over instead of a beautiful sacrificial gift that by Your blood You freely give me. **Father forgive, Christ have mercy.**

For the schemes and plans of man, thinking that they will result in the growth of our gatherings instead of prayerful obedience and seeking Your will. For the sins of our world, for the aggression, the pollution, the racism, the greed, the violence and the immorality. **Father forgive, Christ have mercy.**

Father, I name the specific things for which I come to You, asking for Your forgiveness....
Father forgive, Christ have mercy.

A time of silence to hear what the Lord may be saying to us today.

God of love and power, thank You for the forgiveness and freedom You have given me from my sins, heal and strengthen me by Your Holy Spirit. I am reminded that, as a believer, I am Your redeemed child, bought back into relationship with You for a price, the suffering and death of my Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.

Your Grace is an unmerited gift to me each and every day. I pray Your Holy Spirit will fill me afresh today with miraculous light, love and kindness so that I may always reflect Your wondrous glory **Amen.**

Song: O Church arise SoF1981

Sing/read /pray/ proclaim the words.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A98YQHG8tLY&ab_channel=GettyMusicVEVO

O Church, arise, and put your armour on;
Hear the call of Christ our Captain.
For now the weak can say that they are strong
In the strength that God has given.
With shield of faith and belt of truth,
We'll stand against the devil's lies;
An army bold, whose battle-cry is Love,
Reaching out to those in darkness.

Our call to war, to love the captive soul
But to rage against the captor;
And with the sword that makes the wounded
whole,
We will fight with faith and valour.
When faced with trials on every side
We know the outcome is secure,
And Christ will have the prize for which He died,
An inheritance of nations.

Come see the cross, where love and mercy meet,
As the Son of God is stricken;
Then see His foes lie crushed beneath His feet,
For the Conqueror has risen!
And as the stone is rolled away,
And Christ emerges from the grave,
This victory march continues till the day
Every eye and heart shall see Him.

So Spirit, come put strength in every stride,
Give grace for every hurdle,
That we may run with faith to win the prize
Of a servant good and faithful.
As saints of old still line the way,
Retelling triumphs of His grace,
We hear their calls and hunger for the day
When with Christ we stand in glory. Stuart Townsend &
Keith Getty.

Our Lord's Prayer (the Christian family prayer):

Our Father in Heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your Kingdom come,
Your will be done,

on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins,

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For Yours is the Kingdom and the power

and the glory forever. **Amen.**

Prayer: Loving Lord God, as we read Your Holy Word and the accompanying notes, we pray today that our hearts and minds will be fully open to hear what You are saying to us. May Your Word always be revelation to us, filled with truth and fresh insight. **Amen**

Scripture Reading: John 4: 1-26

Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John— although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

"I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

"Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he." New International Version

A time to pause, read again, pray, and reflect.

Preaching Notes: *these notes are a supplement to the weekly video which can be viewed on our YouTube channel.*

Today Samaritans have become world famous for being an organisation that helps people in

extreme distress. They listen; they talk calmly and help people see a way forward. The irony of their name "The Samaritans" is that these people were hated by the 1st century Jews. But here in John's Gospel the Samaritans are important, and this is the passage that makes them so.

Jesus is already known as a holy man, he is the man that is going to bring Israel back to God. However if we take a look at the whole diorama it is a bit like when newspapers ask if you can see what is wrong in a particular picture. They don't mean it is a bad picture they are just saying that something in the picture that is unusual doesn't ring true. In this diorama things are not as they should be.

1. We have a man.
2. We have a Samaritan woman.
3. We have them together talking.

The first problem with this is that Jesus should not be approaching this woman for many reasons, she is alone without father, brother or husband and therefore men would not want to be alone with a woman never mind talk to such a person. Secondly she is a Samaritan, a sworn enemy of the Jews and a woman of bad reputation. She has been married five times and is now living with a man that is not her husband. She should not be out at this time of day but she is as she is trying to avoid seeing anyone. She certainly did not want to start up a conversation with anyone.

Here is this man asking her for a drink and also says she should ask him for a drink. It becomes obvious as Jesus talks with this woman that he is well aware of her circumstances and that is why he offers her the living water. He is offering her water that will mean that she is never thirsty again. This spring of water will refresh her and give her new life.

If we think about this woman's past and the number of times she had tried to start again, five husbands are evidence of that, you can understand why she would give up trying to change her life but here was a man offering her "new" life, she doesn't know exactly what he is talking about but she does realise that she wants to know more.

Jesus now says to her to go and call your husband – even although he knew she did not have a husband. Was he trying to trip her up or was he just trying to point out her sin. He is beginning to remove the mask this woman is wearing, and touches who she really is. The whole reason she was getting water around noon and not early in the morning or in the evening was because she was avoiding other people. She was seen as a very sinful woman.

She tries to throw up a smokescreen between her and the Messiah. She changes the subject and tries to lure him away from her sin.

We all know it is not easy to confront our failures, our disappointments, our pain, and to hope again is scary. If we begin to hope again we can be disappointed again.

However scary it might be, to make a new start is exactly what the Bible is promising “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone and the new is here” (2 Cor 5:17).

But what happens with this new creation? What happens to us after we get this chance at a new beginning?

When we make that decision to give ourselves to Christ and he begins that work of recreation in us we become His ambassadors, we are entrusted with the message of reconciliation. Suddenly our lives have a purpose.

The woman at the well eventually realises that she has encountered and personally talked with the Messiah. She begins to change; she no longer sees herself as a hopeless outcast. Instead, she realises that she has been entrusted with a message, with wonderful good news. The Messiah is here.

This woman who walked to the well, walked to the well without a friend, without hope, without a future, this very woman runs back to town telling everyone she has met the Messiah. She tells the people "Come see a man who told me everything I ever did, could this be the Christ". It was because of this woman's testimony---- "He told me everything I did"----- that many of the Samaritans from the town came to him. Because of his words, many more became believers.

When we meet Jesus as our personal Messiah, then our lives are filled with a deeper purpose, then we become His ambassadors, then we are entrusted with the message of reconciliation.

I could ask you the question "Where does this message leave us today?" but I won't, the question I am going to ask is this, "Where does this message find us today?"

Well it doesn't really matter where you are today, because today is a new day.

Today is a new day. Jesus is offering you what he offered the woman at the well - a new creation, living water.

Go on. Drink it. **Amen** Written by Local Preacher Diana Middleditch.

A motherly “Bible hall of fame”:

For Eve, the world's first mother and the first to experience the pain of losing a child.

Sarah Hannah and Elizabeth, for your courage and patience waiting for the miracle of children. May all who long for children be strengthened by your experience and be comforted in their pain.

Rachel, you carried the burden of grief and wept for your children. Hold the hand of all those who weep for their children - children who have gone missing, who have died or are lost to them in other ways.

Jochebed, you used wisdom and insight to protect your children, give to all mothers this same understanding in the bringing up of their children especially in vulnerable and threatening times.

Naomi and Ruth, love can conquer all trials. Help all mothers to love constantly and deeply when life seems impossible and despair weighs heavy upon them.

And lastly Mary, whose yes to God changed our world forever. Thank you for your obedience, your faithful love and tender care of our Lord and Saviour Jesus.

Lord, thank you for all faithful mothers, known and unknown.

Prayers of Intercession:

Lord in our service theme of 'Encounters with Jesus' we heard recently about the 'Wedding at Cana', How lovely it is to picture you with your Mother and friends in a happy and joyful place.

Today on Mother's day, help us to celebrate and remember our own mothers and family, to thank you for them and also to remember and pray for Mothers near and far, who are suffering right now.

Loving God, How heart-breaking it must be, to be a Mother who is unable to put food on the table for her hungry children. We bring to you the troubles in Somalia, where we see great suffering, we pray for this people and lift the whole situation to you.

Many countries have had to enforce a lockdown, but with no benefits system, many are left unable to provide food for their families. We ask that you would help aid to reach those in need, and also that these countries will receive a good supply of the Covid vaccine for their people.

We lift to you our Queen, a mother, grandmother and great grandmother, experiencing trouble and division within her family, Lord we pray that they may be blessed with your love and wisdom, please bring peace and reconciliation to the Royal Family.

We pray for wisdom and strength for the leaders of our country and all those involved in the decisions being made to bring us out of this lockdown.

We think of our community, our Church, families, friends and neighbours, some suffering because of the loss of loved ones, some unwell, many feeling low or facing problems each day, we pause to name them and pray for them

Father God, we look forward to and pray for the time we can come back to worship you in our building, when we can sing hymns and pray together, share fellowship, sit closely, hug or shake hands and spend time with the passer by.

Thank you Lord that we are able to bring our prayers for others to you. Help us through this week to see situations and people that we can bring to you in prayer, and where we can, to share you and your love with others.

We ask all these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ. **Amen** Written by Janine Witts

Song: The Church's one foundation StF 690

Sing/read or proclaim the words.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHCqXL3mCwU>

The church's one foundation
is Jesus Christ, her Lord;
she is his new creation
by water and the Word:
from heaven he came and sought her
to be his holy bride;
with his own blood he bought her,
and for her life he died.

Called out from every nation,
yet one o'er all the earth,
her charter of salvation
one Lord, one faith, one birth;
one holy name she blesses,
partakes one holy food,
and to one hope she presses,
with every grace endued.

Yet she on earth hath union
with the God the Three in One,
and mystic sweet communion
with those whose rest is won:
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we,
like them, the meek and lowly,
on high may dwell with thee. Samuel John Stone (1832-1900)

Benediction: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord, knowing that you are embraced by the full and satisfying love of God; a love that is sweeter and more tender than any you have ever known.

Amen.

You are always welcome to contact me 01425 673350 or phillip.dixon@methodist.org.uk YouTube links are external resources and are provided to help you engage with the songs. Singing the Faith and Hymns and Psalms resources are provided under license: CCLI 178182.