

March 11th 2018 - Mothering Sunday

St Stephen's Church

Revd John McGrath

Our reading from Luke gives Simeon's prophecy for Mary that. 'a sword will pierce your own soul too'. All parents want the well-being of their children. They are willing to suffer for their children's sake. Obviously they want them to be happy and reach their full potential. A good friend of mine has a son who, as a child, was very caring, very good at sports and had a bright future ahead of him. In his teenage years he became addicted to drugs and is now serving a sentence in prison. She looks at his childhood photos and thinks of what a different future he could have had. She does not like what he has done and the pain and sorrow she has suffered, but she could never stop loving him. No doubt many mothers experience both sorrow and joy as they bring up their children and on what is called Mother's Day it is right for children to give thanks for and give presents to their mothers.

However, today is, within the church, Mothering Sunday and we are to think about mother church. Just as a mother wants to nurture and raise their child, so mother Church wants to raise godly children. In baptism we are born again as children of God. Baptism is referred to in our reading from Colossians. In baptism we put off our old nature and are clothed in Christ. We are to behave as Christ would. So, we read, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Above all clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. We are reminded to consider our brothers and sisters in Christ. "Bear with one another and if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."

Just as a mother would want to raise her child and especially make them aware of the need to care for their own brothers and sisters, so the church nurtures us to love God and our brothers and sisters in Christ. If our relationship with God and our brothers and sisters is right then we worship God with gratitude in our hearts. The church provides us with the Bible and Colossians reminds us to 'let the word of Christ dwell in you richly'.

My friend is obviously upset with her child ending up in prison when he had so many opportunities to do well. In a similar way mother Church will be upset with her children if we fail to grow to maturity in Christ. So today on mothering Sunday I urge you to be better children of your Heavenly Father and of mother Church. Even though none of you can be considered bad Christians, I hope you can leave here today with the intention of growing to your full potential in Christ. Amen.