

## **Sermon: Everyday love...**

**Preacher: Mike**

**Readings:** Colossians 3.12-17

John 19.25b-27

So today is the day when we're encouraged to think of the word "Mother", though how we apply it will depend very much on the title that we give to this day – is it "Mothering Sunday" or "Mother's Day"? If we insist on "Mothering Sunday", then our origins are in a 16<sup>th</sup> Century European tradition, that existed to allow people opportunity to visit their "Mother church" – the church that they were baptised in or their local parish church. However, if we take our reference as "Mother's Day", then our origins are much more recent, being traceable to an early 20<sup>th</sup> century movement in North America that sought to encourage Americans to honour all the Mothers in their families. What we have today is something of a hybrid – a joining together of the old and the new, with both terms still being used, but it is undoubtedly the American

influence that dominates our cultural understanding of this day.

This modern understanding of Mothering Sunday now sits comfortably alongside so many other commemoration days - days where we are told to momentarily fix our attention on a particular person or cause. Within the family, we now have Father's Day, Sibling's Day and Grandparent's Day. And so far this year we have also had Martin Luther King Day, World Religion Day, World Book Day, International Women's Day, Dr Sues Day, Love your Liver Day and Squirrel Appreciation Day. And coming up next week we have National No Smoking Day, Sport Relief Day, National Poultry Day and International Puppetry Day! The youngsters might also be interested to learn that March is National Stay in Bed month!

In fact, we could easily find an awareness day for every day of the year. Some of these will be high profile and attract significant participation and organised fundraising initiatives and some will simply attract a fleeting glance as we open up

Google. But why do we need them and why do we need Mothering Sunday?

Well there are perhaps at least two answers to that first question. We live in very fast paced world and a culture of “busyness” seems to dominate most economically developed nations. As a result, it is easy for us to be forever looking forward to the next task and we can often fail to notice the plight of others or those to whom we owe thanks. And as technology has developed and our perspective has become increasingly global, there has also become an ever-increasing body of information for us to be made aware of.

So, these awareness days are important as a means of making us stop and take stock, but perhaps also to have fun and identify another layer of meaning in our lives. Mothering Sunday has certainly evolved to give us that particular opportunity to focus on Mothers – it is, indeed, hard to miss it – but it has also become a significant commercial success and, as such, invites a degree of cynicism when we consider the marketing that works

alongside it. Nevertheless, I’m sure that most mothers appreciate there being at least one day when family members seem to stop and notice something of what they do and the many sacrifices that they make.

Yet, what if we showed that appreciation for mothers on every day? What if we showed such appreciation for all peoples on every day? Would we then need such a mind boggling array of days to have our attention directed for us? Would we then need to be told to stop and think? To be instructed to be considerate?

Well, I don’t think we would, but the question remains as to whether this is possible - could we really manage to be sufficiently appreciative of the so many things that require our attention. And it’s here that I think the reading from Paul’s letter to the Colossians becomes particularly applicable.

Paul is dealing with a group of new Christians who have clearly misunderstood Jesus’ teachings and, rather than hearing His message of love for all, have adopted a sense of having special status. In

this community, there seems to be little appreciation of others, but Paul doesn't correct them by telling them to set up a series of awareness days, but rather tells them that they must clothe themselves "*...with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*" *They must also put on forgiveness and, finally, over them all, put on love.*

Paul is telling them to be considerate of all, but he is not limiting this to a single day or telling them that he will arrange special occasions for them to be followers of Jesus. Rather, he is instructing them to change the very nature of their character, to take responsibility and to permanently put on layers of compassion and love...he is telling them to grow up and become what God has made them to be – beings made to live in love.

Now, I am quite confident that there is no Mother's Day in Heaven. And that is not because mothers aren't considered special in the Kingdom of God, but rather because there is no need to single out a special day for special behaviour. In God's

kingdom, respect, gratitude and love are everyday features.

In the Gospel reading, Jesus demonstrates the extent to which this "kingdom love" is to be understood when he addresses the beloved disciple, thought by most to be John, and his Mother, Mary. On the cross, and about to die, Jesus doesn't just say "look after each other" or "make a special occasion to honour each other", but he asks them to love each other in the deepest and widest way possible: "*...he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.'*"<sup>27</sup> *Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.'*"

So, yes, let us celebrate today and the wonder and the joy and depth of love that is contained in the miracle of motherhood, but let us also pray for a world in which the love we remember on this day is a permanent feature of how we live on each and every day. Amen