



## SUNDAY WORSHIP

### *A short form of worship to use at home this Mothering Sunday*

#### *A Song of Praise*

- 1 Jesus, like a mother you gather your people to you;  
you are gentle with us as a mother with her children.
- 2 Often you weep over our sins and our pride,  
tenderly you draw us from hatred and judgement.
- 3 You comfort us in sorrow and bind up our wounds,  
in sickness you nurse us, and with pure milk you feed us.
- 4 Jesus, by your dying we are born to new life;  
by your anguish and labour we come forth in joy.
- 5 Despair turns to hope through your sweet goodness;  
through your gentleness we find comfort in fear.
- 6 Your warmth gives life to the dead,  
your touch makes sinners righteous.
- 7 Lord Jesus, in your mercy heal us;  
in your love and tenderness remake us.
- 8 In your compassion bring grace and forgiveness,  
for the beauty of heaven may your love prepare us.

*from Anselm of Canterbury*

#### *Collect*

God of love,  
Passionate and strong,  
Tender and careful:  
Watch over us and hold us  
All the days of our life;  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord

#### *New Testament Reading: 2 Corinthians: 1:3-7*

<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. <sup>5</sup> For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. <sup>6</sup> If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. <sup>7</sup> And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

#### *Gospel reading: Mathew 23:37*

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.

## Reflection

Many of us will have had plans for Mothering Sunday, usually a genuinely joyful and celebratory moment in the church calendar. We certainly had plans for a special celebration as our two congregations had planned to join together this Sunday. Instead, today the national mood feels sombre and millions will understandably feel a deep level of uncertainty. None of us could ever have imagined this Sunday would look or feel so different after the far-reaching changes in our day-to-day lives that have been put into effect this week. I wonder how you are feeling today. Perhaps anxious, perhaps even afraid; so much change so quickly and an unknown future. We are in a deeply unexpected place, a place that none of us would choose to be.

St Paul had many gifts and attributes not least as a brilliant theologian and church planter. But one of the secrets of the fruitfulness of his ministry, which perhaps could be overlooked, was his ability to be able to experience the joy which his faith gave him in all circumstances however hard. And he seemed to face more extreme hardships, and more often than most of us ever will. Today's reading from his second letter to the church in Corinth is a great example as he begins with praise to God-why? Because he has learned that God is the God of all compassion and comfort. And that God is with us in every situation no matter how dire.

What makes Christianity unique is that we worship a God who is not remote from suffering, who is not far off, but a God who is near, who came and lived amongst us and knows what suffering pain and even death feels like. A God who knows us better than we know ourselves, who can and does comfort us.

As a parent, as a mother my strong desire as it became clear the virus was spreading to our shores, was to have my family all safely home. There was that instinct to protect, even though of course my children are adults and are not in need of my protection.

It reminds me of the lovely picture given by Jesus of how God is like a mother hen longing to gather her chicks under her wings even though the chicks are not always willing to be gathered. Any of us who have been around young children know all too well that a young hurting child's place of comfort is to snuggle into their parent for both comfort and protection.

None of us know what even this coming week will bring but what we do know as people of faith, is that we have a God who is infinitely compassionate, who will be with us through it all and whose nature as a heavenly parent is to protect, comfort and strengthen.

That's why when St Paul talked about being sustained by God's grace in all the hardships he experienced, this wasn't just eloquent words or vague hopes. Paul knew the literal reality of being emotionally, physically and spiritually strengthened, sufficient to work out the calling God had given him; the calling to support, encourage and reach out to his brothers and sisters in Christ and the churches he had founded. In the same way through the grace of God let's also reach out in support and encouragement to one another, to those closest to us, our families, and to those around us in our communities, our neighbours and friends. That may be through prayer or a telephone call or an email or, if we can, by one of the many

online means through social media. Or it may be practical help – do see the notice below which suggests how we may be able to serve our wider community. None of us knows how long this will last but wouldn't it be special if each of us were able to look back when it does end and recognise that we had all grown a bit in our practical love and care for one another.

So whatever you are doing this Mothering Sunday, may you know the grace of God strengthening you and enabling you to reach out with same parental love of God, in care and nurture of one another.

**Prayers: Choose whichever is most helpful for you from the two prayer formats below:**

We pray today and in the coming week for:

- Our Prime Ministers and his govt and advisors –wisdom, strength and resilience and good health
- Communities here and abroad to look beyond themselves and care for one another for the common good
- All working in our hospitals and healthcare system –skill, wisdom, energy and good health
- All those working behind the scenes keeping our communities functioning as normally as possible
- For those who were already in distress perhaps through flooding, illness or bereavement
- For those known to us in need of our prayers and for ourselves.

*Or perhaps you may like to use these prayers:*

Let us pray to God,  
who alone makes us dwell in safety:

For all who are affected by coronavirus,  
through illness or isolation or anxiety,  
that they may find relief and recovery:  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For those who are guiding our nation at this time,  
and shaping national policies,  
that they may make wise decisions:  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For doctors, nurses and medical researchers,  
that through their skill and insights  
many will be restored to health:  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For the vulnerable and the fearful,  
for the gravely ill and the dying,  
that they may know your comfort and peace:  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,  
to the mercy and protection of God.  
Merciful Father,  
**accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.**

**Amen**

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.

**Closing prayer**

Keep us good Lord,  
Under the shadow of your mercy  
In this time of uncertainty and distress.  
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,  
And lift up all who are brought low;  
That we may rejoice in your comfort  
Knowing that nothing can separate us from your love  
In Christ Jesus our Lord

**Amen**

### **A final blessing**

The Lord bless us, and preserve us all evil,  
And keep us in eternal life.

Amen

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God

---

### **Other resources for worship**

BBC radio 4 Sunday Worship 8.10am

For those who enjoyed Alpha you may like to watch the live broadcast from HTB with Nicky Gumbel at different times during the day on Sunday <https://www.htb.org/sundayonline>

Church of England website as links to other broadcasts and online resources

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

There is lots available online if you need any help finding something that is helpful do contact me.

---