



Mothering Sunday

Two sermon ideas

1. Facing an uncertain future

- In between Christmas and Easter, John 19.25-27 reminds us of both these events.
- We see Jesus on the cross, alongside Mary coming face to face with the prophetic words of Simeon when her son was still a baby:
'This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul, too' (Luke 2.34-35).
- Reflect on Christ's understanding of suffering – he knew what it is like to suffer physically, but also to see the pain of a loved one.
- Consider Mary and the immense pain of a mother watching the suffering of her child. These events were set in motion from the moment she said, 'Here I am', as a teenager.
- How much of this is the experience of being a parent in general? Setting the foundations as best we can, and then a gradual letting go?
- How do we support families in the midst of this 'uncertain future'?

Peter and Jane's story

Peter and Jane were preparing to become adoptive parents and were given a folder to read the stories of some of the children available. They read how young Sam was a loving child but had a very uncertain future. The social workers wanted any adopter to understand what they were taking on. Peter and Jane were put off at first, and then realised that no parent knows what is in store and they deal with things as they happen. Sam is now an important part of the new family they have created as Peter and Jane have gone on to adopt two more amazing children.

Consider how you deal with uncertainty; are you motivated by faith or fear?

Pause for thought

- As a church how do your programmes, groups and timings help or hinder families of different contexts within your community?
- How do we help each other understand 'different' types of families eg step, adopted, foster, those supporting children with extra needs, single parents, other family members taking parental roles, working, unemployed, etc.?



2. True family

John's passage suggests how Jesus views family:

- Even at this point, Jesus thinks about Mary and her future by making provision for her.
- Despite Jesus having brothers, he asks one of his disciples to take her into his home.
- Perhaps because he wanted her to be cared for spiritually, by a favoured disciple.
 - Who have been our spiritual parents/guides?
 - How do we spiritually support others?
 - How do we encourage each other in this?
- A new family is formed in this passage. Now more than ever, families come in all shapes and sizes. We need to work hard to understand and support each other's families.

How do we, as the Church support important organisations, like The Children's Society, who provide such vital support, research and campaigning for children and families?

- Jesus appears to count God's family as just as important as blood ties (cf 1 John 3)
 - How do we support each other?
 - How could we improve?
 - How do we learn how to give love and importantly, receive it too?
- What do we want to celebrate about our church family? Take the chance to thank children's and youth workers and encourage them in their roles. Acknowledge anyone who volunteers, takes interest in and encourages children and families in your church.
- Jesus helps us to understand what God's love looks like – and no more so than in this passage. May we reflect that love to one another – in our families, our church, our community and beyond.

Chris's Story

Chris was a 12-year-old boy who displayed extreme behavioural and emotional issues both at school and home. He attributed this to a turbulent, chaotic childhood and home life, as a result of domestic and alcohol abuse. Due to his anti-social behaviour, lack of empathy for others and outbursts of anger, Chris's learning support mentor referred him to The Children's Society Youth Inclusion programme. He's been able to continue his studies and earned a place at college where he hopes to learn the skills to eventually set up his own business. He also hopes to volunteer for The Children's Society to help other children who have had the kind of tough upbringing he had.

Chris said, 'I've been through hell since I was small. I've been through things and seen things not even adults should have seen.' 'I'm now hoping to start volunteering with The Children's Society myself, so I can use my experience in a positive way to help other children who have had the kind of tough upbringing I did.'

- Jesus challenges us to reconsider who we call family. Does Chris's story challenge you to reconsider those who may be outcast because of their anti-social behaviour?
- God's love always transforms, even in the darkest places, as shown in today's reading. Chris has been transformed; how can we show this love, even in the darkest places?