

On this mothering Sunday, and at this time of terrible wars. we remember those mothers who are mourning or anxious about their children in wars and conflicts around the world. This is hymn to the well known tune.

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Simeon and Anna - the oldies - Anna 84! - in the temple. Bless Jesus, Recognise him as the messiah, the promise of hope for Israel.

Yet also terrible warning -

Jesus will cause some to be lifted up and bring others own,
And as the light of the world will reveal what we'd rather keep hidden

And a sword will pierce your own soul too.

Poor Mary..

In Luke, after the shepherds visit, it says - she pondered all these things in her heart.

What a birth - an angel asks her if she will carry this special baby - and she says. - let it be.

But whatever she expected, its not like that.

The baby's born miles from home, from her family and the support.

Theres's shepherds, maji bring strange gifts

And when she gets him circumcised on the 8th day - Anna and Simeon turn up with this strange message.

As if coping with a new born, with your first child, when you're a young girl, possibly 13 or 14 isn't enough...

If she wrote the hymn. - tell out my soul - the Magnificat, - when she was told she was pregnant - I wonder what song wrote at this point.. something a lot more minor key for sure.

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Its hard to be any parent, let alone the parent of a child who is the hope of all Israel and the world.

We love our children, and we hope we get it right, that we've said enough, or shown enough. But you can never tell.

Some people look at Jesus and say, well his parents did a really good job of raising him - its not just he's polite and well mannered

(or is he? When he throws the money changers out the temple, or calls the Pharisees a brood of vipers?)

but he's wise, and kind, and holds on to the truth. All the things we'd want for our kids.

Some people think because he was the son of god he didn't have to learn anything, he just knew it all already,

A bit like he didn't really face temptation and not give in

Or didn't really suffer, or hurt because he was God.

But he has to be fully human to redeem us, if he doesn't know what its like to be tempted or to suffer pain, then god didn't become like us, and god doesn't know what its like to be human, and Jesus is no longer the bridge between us and god, he's just a distant alien - like shiva or superman.

So I think Jesus definitely did learn values from his parents, - but probably just from his mum. The bible speaks a lot about Mary throughout Jesus life, at his first miracle, in the middle and at the cross. But Joseph is strangely absent. And we know that Joseph is an older man, (possibly 80!) and so the church has historically thought that Joseph died while Jesus was growing up. Jesus has brothers and sisters, including one named James, who goes on to lead the church in Jerusalem,

But it was his mum who was around, his mum that taught him right from wrong, and how to treat others, and all about the Hebrew bible too.

Yet how terribly painful for her - to know that he was something special, and yet what would happen.

Teh crowds follow Jesus, she is pleased.

The crowds turn against Jesus, the Pharisees put a price on his head, she is worried.

She was part of the women who went travelling with the other disciples, they cooked and shopped and did the washing. And they were there in that passover week in Jerusalem.

And it must broken her heart to see him on the cross.

A sword will pierce your own soul. The smell of myrrh as they put him in the tomb.

It was CS Lewis, writing after the death of his wife who said - 'If you love deeply, you're going to get hurt badly. But it's still worth it.' we hurt because we love, that's the deal. She loved Jesus like no one else ever could, and so she hurt like no one else did.

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So Jesus learnt his values from his mother, but also there's more.

Several times in the gospel it mentions Jesus looking at people.

He looks at Zaccheus, and Zaccheus is changed, he looked at the Pharisees and knew what was in his heart. He looked at the crowd and had compassion, he looked at the rich young man and loved him.

Where does this look come from? Where did he learn to look like this?

Its not just a value he's picked up from his mum. Its something much deeper, he learned so early,

Before he could even speak.

In The look between a mother and a baby.

You see we know about birds getting imprinted on the first things they see when they come out the egg. We know that other mammals too have this communication, between mother and baby - you see it in dogs or cats. But we assume its normal - they can't speak.

So when we look at humans we think - oh - yes, mother and baby talk to each other, that's how they bond.. but no, no. Its way before words.

Its so profound. Before there is language how does the baby make its needs known?

How does the son of God make its needs known to Mary,

The only way is through looking and pleading and asking, and the mother guessing and trying to tune into the baby.

This is as mundane and ordinary as the grass, its happened to all of us, it happens every day - but it the basis of all our secure feelings and communication. That knowledge of feeling heard, seen, understood - the level to which we have it affects everything in our life that follows afterwards.

And some of us will have had it better and some worse, and some mothers have been better at it - nobody's perfect, and we've all managed to get this far, so we all had good-enough mothers.

But this is Mary, giving that look to Jesus.

And I can see it 1000 paintings. You have to remember there was no other subject allowed to paint for 1000 years or so, other than religious paintings. So if you wanted to paint a pretty lady or a baby - well Madonna and child was your only option.

But so many of the paintings capture this look..

A look of love, and adoration and worship.

Jesus is looking with love, but not worship?

I wonder about the differences between worship and love is - we can unpack that one day.

Because Love is surely part of worship...

but here we have Mary worshipping the baby.

And this is a crazy thing that we have painted. How can a human give birth to God? how can a human hold God in their hands?

But there is also the miracle of every birth - how has this new life been created. That came from seeming nothing, and was 100% dependent on mother - and yet, now, can live on its own, and produce new life?!!! Isn't that a bit miraculous, a bit awe inspiring? Doesn't it make us feel that there is some spark of divine in all of us...

So on Mothering Sunday, lets give thanks

for Mary - the example she gives and the way she mothered Jesus

For our mothers - and all the life and love they gave us

And for our mother church - which also tries to nurture us and feed us, and hold us.

	Hymn	467	Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the
	Epistl	2 Corinthians 1:3-7 ⚡	
	I dream this world will wake up		
	Gosp	Luke 2:33-35 ⚡	
	Hymn	380	O Lord my God, when I in awesome
	Hymn	311	Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us
	Song	799_M	All I once held dear (Guitar)