

It is probably appropriate, on Mothering Sunday, to start with an article I read this past week titled, **The Changing Face of the Male Pop-Star Heartthrob.**

Written by a child of the 90s, Kat George opens the article with the statement, *"When I was a teenager, Usher was my ultimate heartthrob. He had everything: the cheeky smile, the sensual, body-rolling dance moves, the abs you could grate cheese on. I've always loved cheese!"*

She goes on to reminisce, *"Very rarely are heartthrobs born of raw, primeval masculinity. Unless, of course, they are Bruce Springsteen!"* Kat George's article laments the change in the male pop-star heart-throbs of the 1960s and the present, that they now they show more of their feminine side. Then she hastily adds, *"Elvis Presley, with his hips that didn't lie, was a deft and irresistible marriage of the two (masculine & feminine). His perfectly coiffed hair, milky soft skin, and dreamy love songs swayed towards the gentle and feminine, while his war-veteran, jailhouse-rocking ways, swung back to the aggressively masculine."*

Beyond the mind-numbing humour, that women's hearts are set aflutter by men who display more of their feminine side, Kat George's writing highlights the subtle effect of change.

This Sunday is evidence of another "shift" which blurs the lines between Mothering Sunday and Mothers Day, a slow and sustained shift from a Church-centred honouring of mothers in obedience to the fifth of the ten commandments, *Honour your father and mother*<sup>1</sup>, to a more secular event commending mothers for being mothers. This has been a subtle change from what was an inclusive honouring of "everyone's mother", to a more self-centred, "women who are mothers", which of course excludes many women who either by choice or by circumstance, are not, or cannot be mothers.

---

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 20:12

Many churches see fewer women on Mothering Sunday because women are made to feel excluded for being mothers. The intention of Mothering Sunday's was to help everyone, women **AND** men, celebrate and give thanks for the life of their mothers.

These subtle shifts in focus, have another effect. As our attention turns away from an inclusive Mothering Sunday, honouring Mothers for their love, our hearts and minds are turned away from celebrating and honouring God, in whom is **only** love.

How then, on Mothering Sunday, do we celebrate God, in whom is **only** love?

First things first. It is only through Mother's willingness, I (we) came into this world. Mother carried, fed and nurtured us, until we were able to stand on our own feet. She may not have been a perfect mother, and chances are none of our mothers were, but we would not be sitting here today, were it not for mother's **willingness** to carry us.

The image of being carried when we are weak, unable, or dis-abled, is a powerful image of God's love for us. God uses this powerful image on several occasions throughout history, to remind us of His love. Twice, God reminded the nation of Hebrews of His love for them, delivering them from slavery into freedom. First he said, *I carried you on eagles wings and brought you to myself*<sup>2</sup> and then, *the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, all the way that you went until you came to this place*<sup>3</sup>.

The act of *carrying* is an act of selfless love. As God carries us when we are weak, unable to protect ourselves from harm and danger, is the act of Mother *carrying* us when we are unable to support and sustain ourselves. Mother is only imitating, what God does best!

---

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 19:4

<sup>3</sup> Deuteronomy 1:31

What, therefore, makes this love so special?

The answer is wrapped up in the story of salvation.

Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome, is the best narrative of the story of salvation, which is at the heart of the Gospel message.

Paul starts by reminding them, and all of us, we have fallen short of the glory of God, because of sin in this world, and in our lives. But God is not without a plan. God's remedy for our dilemma of sin, is provided by His Son Jesus the Christ. Using Abraham as the example, who was made Holy, not by any work he did, but **only** by the grace of God, Paul tells us, the work of Christ is to make us Holy and presentable to God, not because we have earned it, or worked for it in any way, but **only** by the grace and the love of God.

Baptism is a sign of our desire to be made Holy and presentable before God, and through baptism, we appeal for protection from this world, that we **remain** Holy and presentable before God.

In order that we remain Holy and presentable to God on the day Christ takes us home, God gives us the Holy Spirit. If we accept God's purpose for Christ, and His Kingship in God's Kingdom, we need never fear God condemnation, or His alienation.

The Holy Spirit knows we suffer in our mortal body; the Holy Spirit knows, our minds and spirits are often haunted and tormented trying to unscramble right from wrong.

The Holy Spirit also knows, God is working all things according to His plan and purpose, for those who love God, and who accept God's calling and His purpose.

So, the Holy Spirit is an advocate for those who are weak and find journeying through life difficult, interceding before God for us, making petitions, negotiating and mediating for us before God.

The essence of the Gospel message is God's love for us. But Paul knows we need something more reassuring. He knows, when difficulties arise, when things don't go as we hoped they would, we might question God's love, in the same way as we might have questioned our Mother's love when, in our interest and for our benefit, she did not allow certain things to go the way we wanted.

Paul knows, the Christians in Rome, and we ourselves today, need something more by way of reassurance of God's love. So he says we may know, but need to be constantly reminded of, **nothing can separate us from the love of God; nothing can ever pry us away, remove us from the love God has for each and every one of us.**

Paul makes two emphatic statements. First, *nothing can separate us from the love of Christ*<sup>4</sup>, who demonstrated His love for us by submitting Himself to death on the cross. Anyone who gives His life for us, doesn't do it for the fun of it. In a rescue mission, whether on stormy seas with 20 foot swells, on high mountains, in burning fires, the one who has come to save has little concern for their own life; they might die in order that the one being saved, lives! Nothing can ever separate us from this sacrificial love!

The second emphatic statement Paul makes is, *...nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God, the love that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord!*<sup>5</sup> The statement is abundantly clear... *nothing* in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God...

---

<sup>4</sup> Romans 8:35

<sup>5</sup> Romans 8:39

Perhaps it is appropriate today, to recover the origins of Mothering Sunday. Two ladies, Constance Smith in Britain, and Anna Jarvis in America, never became mothers themselves, but each in their own context, fought to bring the celebration of mothers onto the national stage. Anna Jarvis regretted the growing commercialisation of the day, going to the extent of disapproving pre-printed Mother's Day cards. "*A printed card means nothing,*" she said, "*except that you are too lazy to write to the woman who has done more for you than anyone in the world.*"

That may be an extreme reaction to commercialism, but this morning, lets take a few moments, to thank God for our mother, ... for who she was ... for the way her life was shaped ... for the memories we have of her.

The law of God, which is the law by which society organises itself in order to be whole and complete says, *Honour your father and mother, that your days may be long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.*

It doesn't matter whether, our memories of Mother is positive or negative or a mix of both. Many of us have positive memories of Mother, which is all the more reason to thank God for her. But there may be some here today, whose overall memory of Mother is unhappy and not pleasant. Keeping these memories in our hearts and in our minds, causes more damage. Now is a good time to forgive them in our hearts, because God has forgiven them, and to ask for God's healing, ... that He would take any unpleasant memories, wash it with His forgiveness, and give us the opportunity to thank God for our mother.

This is the love of God - the love which washes away all that is not of Him, and leads us into that place where we can worship Him with all our hearts, souls and minds, and love our neighbours, in the same way as we love ourselves!

As we remember our Mother today, let us be reminded of God's promise to you today, *Even to your old age I am He, and even to your advanced old age, I will carry you! I have made you, and I will carry you; Be assured I will carry you and I will save you.*<sup>6</sup>

Nothing in all creation will ever separate us from this love of God.

**AMEN.**

---

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 46:4