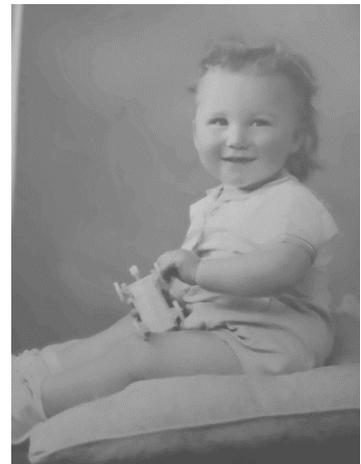


10.03.24 Exodus 2: 1-10 Luke 2:33 – 35 It takes a village to raise a child



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Rev Lin Vawer**

As we make our way through lent each year, this fourth Sunday is also the day designated as Mothering Sunday – a day of happiness and laughter whether it is in remembrance or in the here and now.

In our family we await the arrival of two new babies – twins. Of course their parents are excited (and anxious) but that excitement isn't confined to them, the whole family and extended family eagerly await that phone call or text to announce "they are here!" and then the fun begins!

But who of us hasn't seen a new baby and said "don't they look like...." could be mom or dad but often it is granny or grandad , Uncle Ernie or Aunt Doreen or maybe even further back. And I think we carry those physical traits with us as we grow into our faces.

Mothers or not we have all been children. So let's just see if we can recognise any of these babies and children – they could be sat next to you!

Who are you? - slides.

Some easier to recognise than others the physical traits we have as a child often grow with us into adulthood but there is more to it than DNA for we are more than a lots of cells all joined up. There are traits that we have, that are a product of the Mothering we have received through our early years, childhood, adolescence and in general just growing up. In that sense Mothering is more than biology. For all of us the role models we grow up with – family, teachers, friends, work colleagues – shape the person that we become.

There is a saying "***it takes a village to raise a child***" – male or female , biologically related or not we all have the responsibility (and joy) of mothering.

The reading from Exodus is one of those readings that we take as being a nice story; one of those Biblical narratives that we read almost as a fairy-tale and is pulled out of the bag on special occasions, such as Mothering Sunday, yet when we dig deeper profound teaching is contained within these words, most especially about the value of children and the responsibility we all have to nurture them into a sense of God's destiny for them. This is a story that teaches us about courage, the work of many hands and placing trust in God.

It is a narrative primarily about a child's destiny and is full of strong characters, characters which shape a life and a future. Women feature largely but it begins with a frightened and evil leader. It is set within a context where Every Hebrew baby is under a death sentence. The Bible holds a good collection of baddies and I think that one of the most disturbing has to be Pharaoh, the man who is the most powerful man in the land and yet also the most afraid, so afraid of the slaves he was oppressing that he started to kill all their baby boys. It was an act of profound evil, designed to bring the people to their knees, and eventually exterminate them.

In this culture of fear, we find hidden courage. Hebrew women may be oppressed and persecuted, but they are not cowed, rather they stand for what is right. Women who were often disregarded and considered weak were the ones who resisted.

The midwives must have been afraid, but they act with incredible courage, deciding that vulnerable children were more important than fear, more important than their own lives. They looked to the welfare of the vulnerable and, through him, unknowingly, they would

change the course of history for their entire people. Being able to do something is no excuse for doing nothing. They did what they could, they showed enormous courage, and saved the life of baby Moses.

Jochebed, Moses' mother must have been afraid and yet her intuition told her that her baby would be a man with a great destiny. Her courage would help that destiny to be fulfilled and, quite literally, shake the world. Moses is hidden but nobody can hide forever. No-one can grow up and to be a full person if they spend their life afraid and in hiding. Moses' mother was faced with the worst dilemma: to save Moses' life, the only thing to do was to let him go and trust God for his safety and his future. It is an act of immense faith and courage, the Nile is no gently flowing stream but a dangerous fast running river so whilst it must have torn her heart out to leave him in the reeds, she did so knowing that God would watch over her precious child.

And so, the story progresses and the baby is taken by the Pharaoh's daughter: another act of courage in the light of her father's edict. But Miriam, Moses' sister, had been watching what was happening from the riverbank and she offers to get a Hebrew woman to nurse the child. Wouldn't this have been a courageous act too?

Courage, many hands and placing trust in God, shaped Moses into the person God meant him to be and fulfilled his destiny as deliverer.

What does all this say to us today?

Have we the courage and faith to place our trust in God

To be the many hands that shape the destiny of our own children, the children who come to this church, as well as the children we hope will come?

To do the mothering that is asked of us that will shape the destiny of our children?

To be able to nurture and to let go?

In scripture children were understood to be a sign of God's blessing on a community. Children were revered and honoured as living, breathing proof of the presence, power and blessing of God on the community. I do not see that it is any different for us today and we must be absolutely committed to developing our work amongst children.

A dedicated team go into our schools for assemblies and Open the Book stories. Could you be part of that team?

Criss Cross, our family church, is growing and touching the lives of many in our parish. Could you be part of the team?

On Good Friday we hope to see families coming to Experience Easter through the Easter story. Can you be there to be to show our commitment to our families and children?

Keep on going with the welcome you show when we see our young families in church, and when they are brought for baptism.

Keep on praying, keep on trusting, keep mothering.

Lets go back to the beginning – mothers or not we have all been children. Can we now be the mothering presence for the next generation?

We can be one of the many hands that shape a destiny. It is a lifetime's work, a lifetime's privilege. Thank God.