

Mothers' Day

Exodus 2.1-10

Birth and Youth of Moses

Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him for three months. When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him.

The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. 'This must be one of the Hebrews' children,' she said. Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?' Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Yes.' So the girl went and called the child's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages.' So the woman took the child and nursed it. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, 'because', she said, 'I drew him out of the water.'

What's going on?

This is the famous story of Moses in the bulrushes. It might seem strange that Moses' mother appears to abandon her baby, but the context is that the people of Israel are captive in Egypt and the ruler of Egypt, the Pharaoh, has decreed that all boys born to Israelite women will be killed. Moses' mother loves her baby and does not want him to die, so she hides him and hopes he will be saved. All is well, as the Pharaoh's daughter rescues him and his sister Miriam persuades her to ask his own mother to take care of him for her until he is adopted as the Pharaoh's daughter's own child. This story has at its heart the love and a care of a mother for her child.

Psalm 34. 11-20

**Come, O children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
Which of you desires life,
and covets many days to enjoy good?
Keep your tongue from evil,
and your lips from speaking deceit.
Depart from evil, and do good;
seek peace, and pursue it.**

**The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,
and his ears are open to their cry.
The face of the LORD is against evildoers,
to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears,
and rescues them from all their troubles.
The LORD is near to the broken-hearted,
and saves the crushed in spirit.**

**Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but the LORD rescues them from them all.
He keeps all their bones;
not one of them will be broken.**

What's going on?

Many stories in the Bible talk about God as powerful, mighty, strong and so on, and so identifying God with 'masculine' ideas and images. Yet the Bible also contains images of God as being more like a mother, caring for the creation and protecting it. In this passage God listens to people's troubles and helps those who are unhappy and in need. God rescues and nurtures people and takes care of them.

2 Corinthians 1.3-7

Paul's Thanksgiving after Affliction

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ. If we are being afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation; if we are being consoled, it is for your consolation, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we are also suffering. Our hope for you is unshaken; for we know that as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our consolation.

What's going on?

Similarly, St Paul talks about God as the one who comforts and consoles us, much as a mother does when we are hurt or in trouble. Christian life is not without trouble and sorrow, but we can turn to God to help us through it. Just as God has this 'motherly' trait, so should we, both men and women, care and console others who are hurting.

Luke 2.33-35

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

What's going on?

This passage brings us back to Mary the mother of Jesus and her own role in his life. Simeon tells her that what will happen to Jesus will hurt her too. As a mother she will witness the death of her beloved son. Though it is the greatest honour to be chosen by God for such a great purpose, the fact of being a mother and loving a child also brings sadness and pain, when that child has to suffer and die.