

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020

# Mothering Sunday

Purple



## Collect

God of compassion, whose Son Jesus Christ, the child of Mary, shared the life of a home in Nazareth, and on the cross drew the whole human family to himself: strengthen us in our daily living that in joy and in sorrow we may know the power of your presence to bind together and to heal; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

## 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 English Standard Version (ESV)

### God of All Comfort

1<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. <sup>5</sup> For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>6</sup> If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. <sup>7</sup> Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

**Footnotes:** a. or *For as the sufferings of Christ abound for us, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.*

**COMMENT:** When you first read this passage, one thing stands out; one word gets your attention: Comfort! In the ESV, the word "comfort" or a form of that word is found ten times just in these verses. The meaning of the word, in this context, is help of the highest sort. This is a form of the same word Jesus used, when he said to His disciples, "I will pray the Father, and He will give you

another Helper,” (John 14:16). In those passages, Jesus was promising the Holy Spirit to the apostles to aid them. Whilst the teaching in John’s Gospel is not identical to that of 2 Corinthians 1:3-7, the word is the same, and the use of the word in John’s Gospel gives us insight into the use of the word. Paul is talking about the help God supplies to His suffering people. There is another word to be studied here; affliction (“If we are afflicted”). This word has to do with being under pressure, or in a narrow place where escape seems impossible. Paul and other faithful Christians in his time were pressed into a narrow place. They were restricted, persecuted, and under pressure. For most of them the pressure would continue until they died, but while undergoing all that pressure, they received help from the highest source! And as they received that help, they shared it, comforting each other. God made all this possible through the death of Christ! Thus he is the “God of all comfort” which description opens the passage. In the context of Mothering Sunday, we give thanks for Mothers, who supremely are the people who provide comfort to their children, sharing in the work of our heavenly father.

**John 19:25-27** English Standard Version

#### **Jesus’s Provision for His Mother**

19<sup>25</sup> Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. <sup>26</sup> When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” <sup>27</sup> Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

**COMMENT:** The Evangelist sets the scene to the people present at the foot of the cross. Four women are mentioned: Jesus’ mother, her sister, Mary Clopas’ wife, and Mary Magdalene. The name of the second, the sister of Jesus’ mother, is not mentioned. It is entirely possible that the sister of Jesus’ mother mentioned here is to be identified with the woman named Salome mentioned in Mark 15:40 and also with the woman identified as “the mother of the sons of Zebedee” mentioned in Matthew 27:56. If so, and if John the Apostle is to be identified as the Beloved Disciple, then the reason for the omission of the second woman’s name becomes clear; she would have been John’s own

mother, and he consistently omitted direct reference to himself or his brother James or any other members of his family in the Fourth Gospel. From the cross Jesus saw his mother standing nearby, and the Beloved Disciple also standing nearby. He commended his mother to the care of the Beloved Disciple, speaking to both of them directly. From that moment on, the Beloved Disciple cared for Jesus' mother as his own. If the beloved disciple stands in for all Christians, accepting the mother of the Lord as our own mother, means (among other things) that we are brothers and sisters of our Lord.

**Psalm 34:12-21** *Venite filii audite me* Grail Psalter

**℟ The Lord is close to the broken-hearted.**

<sup>12</sup> Come, children, and hear me  
that I may teach you the fear of the Lord.

<sup>13</sup> Who is he who longs for life  
and many days, to enjoy his prosperity? ℟

<sup>14</sup> Then keep your tongue from evil  
and your lips from speaking deceit.

<sup>15</sup> Turn aside from evil and do good;  
seek and strive after peace. ℟

<sup>16</sup> The Lord turns his eyes to the just  
and his ears to their appeal.

<sup>17</sup> The Lord turns his face against the wicked  
to destroy their remembrance from the earth. ℟

<sup>18</sup> They call and the Lord hears  
and rescues them in all their distress.

<sup>19</sup> The Lord is close to the broken-hearted;  
those whose spirit is crushed he will save. ℟

<sup>20</sup> Many are the trials of the just man  
but from them all the Lord will rescue him.

<sup>21</sup> He will keep guard over all his bones,  
not one of his bones shall be broken. ℟

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end. Amen.**

**COMMENT:** Psalm 34 is an acrostic psalm each verse beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, except the psalm as we have it now has the sixth letter 'vav' missing. The opening lines of the portion chosen from this psalm could have almost be taken from the book of Proverbs (Proverbs 1:7, also see Job 28:28). The question and answer method were part of the ancient pedagogic (teaching) techniques. A similar acrostic arrangement is found in Chapters 2-4 in Lamentations and if this psalm fully followed that arrangement verse 17 in this psalm would follow verse 18, and makes better sense with the Lord hearing the just rather than the wicked whom the Lord has set his face against. The last verse in this portion renders the psalms as a 'messianic psalm' and is counted as a prophecy of our Lord's crucifixion in that the soldier's did not break his legs (John 19:31-34).

### **Post Communion**

Loving God, as a mother feeds her children at the breast you feed us in this sacrament with the food and drink of eternal life: help us who have tasted your goodness to grow in grace within the household of faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### **Blessing**

May the Lord who brought us to birth by his Spirit, strengthen us for the Christian life.

May the Lord who provides for all our needs sustain us day by day.

May the Lord whose steadfast love is constant as a mother's care, send us out to live and work for others.

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

be with you and remain with you always. **Amen.**