

## Mothering Sunday, 22 March 2020

A sermon by Liz Hawkins, Reader.

**Bible reading: John chapter 9, verses 1-41**

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*St John tells how Jesus made a blind man see. As I prepared this sermon for Mothering Sunday I kept thinking about the blind man's parents. They are mentioned in this account but are often overlooked. I wondered what his mother's account of events would look like and I have tried to imagine this. So here goes...*

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When he was born, I knew something was wrong. I couldn't quite put my finger on it. He was a quiet baby – slept a lot. If we placed him near the fire he didn't turn his head towards the flickering flames. He just lay there. It didn't strike me at the time that he couldn't see. Well you just don't think of that do you especially when they're little?

Anyway, it soon became clear that our child was blind. I can remember the terrible feeling of guilt. Was it something I had eaten? Had I been out in the sun too long? Had his dad and I done something wrong? Was God punishing us?

Of course the neighbours started to shun us as though what we had was catching. They were convinced what had happened was a sign of God's displeasure. Some asked straight out what we'd been up to, some accused us of awful crimes – especially the Pharisees. They told us we were being punished by having a child who wasn't 'perfect'. It was a nightmare of a time but we carried on. I suppose one has to.

You see to us our baby boy **was** perfect. We were determined we would look after him. There would be no abandoning him at the side of the road or neglecting him. No, he was ours and

we would care for him.

We did our best, taught him right from wrong and read him the Scriptures. He asked lots of questions, talked a lot and the neighbours who had shunned us began to see that there was nothing wrong with his intelligence. People liked him, he was fun to be around. It's amazing what a bit of love and nurturing can do. He got to know his way around and we encouraged this independence. I know people look down on beggars but we are a poor family and I knew he wanted to earn his keep. He didn't want to be a financial burden to us.

To be honest I didn't like letting him go out on his own. But that's what being a mum is sometimes – learning to let go. Kids have to make their own way and will inevitably stumble and fall. I knew our son would stumble and fall more than most but that could only make him stronger. So I had to be strong for him by letting go but still being there in the background.

Anyway that day we heard from a neighbour how our lovely son had met Jesus and his followers. It seems the disciples saw his blindness as a punishment too but Jesus pushed these silly notions to one side.

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In fact he saw our son's blindness as an opportunity – a chance to show God's love and glory. Jesus put into words what I believed in my heart. We are all loved, all perfect in God's eyes and we all have a part to play in His Kingdom. Our neighbour said that Jesus had rubbed our son's eyes better with mud and spit and then told him to bathe. Then our son could see! At first I couldn't believe that my lad cooperated. I mean, spit and mud! Perhaps my boy could see more than anyone else that Jesus was special. There is more than one way to see I suppose. I know now that Faith makes this possible.

Of course the Pharisees weren't happy. They definitely couldn't see past the ends of their noses. I suppose this Jesus person was turning their world upside down. They were concerned about healing on the Sabbath and such but they couldn't deny what had happened- although they tried. People were asked again and again if the story was true. My son was interrogated and then we were sent for.

Well, we were afraid to be honest . We had already experienced being shunned and punished and we didn't want that to happen again. They tried to say that our son had never been blind. We told the Pharisees that our son was perfectly capable of speaking for himself.

Looking back maybe we should have been more outspoken and less afraid. Yet, we had encouraged our son to be strong, to ignore the nasty comments and the name calling. He had to stand up for himself and he wouldn't have thanked us for fighting his battles. I was also beginning to understand that he

had the strength of God beside him.

So the Pharisees went back yet again to talk to him. They asked him endless questions. I was a bit worried as I could see him becoming impatient with them. He said, quite cheekily I thought *'It sounds as though you're interested in becoming his disciples too!'* |Of course that didn't please them and they went on about how sure they were of Moses coming from God but so unsure of Jesus.

And then our son, the son who had been born blind and now could see told them straight. He said his healing had been from God through Jesus and it was as plain as the nose on your face where He came from. Well they didn't like that either and they cast him out.

Before he left to follow Jesus, he came home. He told us how Jesus had explained the blindness of the Pharisees who could not see past the law keeping and the mundane rituals. Our son explained the clearer sight which Jesus could bring. He said he was, 'the light of the world' who could show everyone the right way if they opened their eyes. I knew then I too would become a follower.

Years later, after Jesus had died we became a Church and continued his work. I believe that the light of the world will keep shining on us, nurturing, encouraging and being there for us when we stumble. I know that we will support each other as we continue to serve God as we open the eyes of others to his glory and love.

Amen.

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Prayers and intercessions
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**Collect for Mothering Sunday**

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.

**Amen**

**Prayers of intercession**

We give thanks for the Church, our mother, who brought us to birth in the family of Christ, through the waters of baptism.  
We pray that all Christians will hear again God's call to mother those in need, and bring them home to God.  
Let us pray to God,  
who alone makes us dwell in safety:

For all who are affected by coronavirus,  
through illness or isolation or anxiety,  
that they may find relief and recovery:  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For those who are guiding our nation at this time,  
and shaping national policies,  
that they may make wise decisions:  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For doctors, nurses and medical researchers,  
that through their skill and insights  
many will be restored to health:  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

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For the vulnerable and the fearful,  
for the gravely ill and the dying,  
that they may know your comfort and peace:  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For our homes and families,  
our schools and young people,  
and all in any kind of need or distress:  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For a blessing on our local parish communities  
that our neighbourhoods may be places of trust and friendship,  
where all are known and cared for:  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,  
to the mercy and protection of God.  
Merciful Father,  
**accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
Amen.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.