

Written Service Sunday March 30th 2025
A service of worship for use at home
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Methodist Circuit
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Mothering Sunday

Lectionary Luke 15:11-32
Prayers have been used from Roots

Call to Worship

Here, there are no strangers,
for all are welcome in this house.
Here, there is only acceptance,
for all are welcome in this house.
Here, there are no divisions,
for all are welcome in this house.
So let us worship in unity and love.

We think and explore today about the Prodigal son and his return to his father's house and the amazing experience of the unconditional love from his father.
We also think today about mothers and the mother figures we have all encountered in our lives.

Hymn StF 553 I am a new creation

I Am a New Creation,
No more in Condemnation,
Here in the Grace of God, I stand.
My Heart is Overflowing,
My Love just keeps on Growing,
Here in the Grace of God, I stand.

And I will Praise You, Lord,
Yes, I will Praise You, Lord,
And I will Sing of all that You have done.
A Joy that knows no limit,
A Lightness in My Spirit
Here in the Grace of God, I stand.

Prayers of adoration and confession

Lord, you are our passion.
We rejoice in you, our Saviour.
May the sweet fragrance of our adoration anoint you
as we worship at your feet.
To you be the glory.

Amen.

Prayer of confession

Father, we are sorry for taking our eyes off you and yearning for worldly riches.
Forgive us for losing sight of your grace.
Jesus, we are sorry for investing in things that are not of you, believing and valuing worldly opinions and aspirations instead.
We're sorry for attempting to hide things from you. We know it is futile trying to be something we're not, as you know us inside out. You know the real us. You know our passions and what we truly value. And you respect us just as we are.
Holy Spirit, help us put away everything that is not good for us, that works to take us further from you.
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, forgive us and refresh us. Enable us to put all aside for you and focus on getting to know you better and mining your riches.

Amen.

Hymn I'm special

I'm special because God has loved me,
For he gave me the best thing he had to save me;
His own Son Jesus, crucified to take the blame
For all the bad things I have done.
Thank you Jesus, thank you Lord,
For loving me so much.
I know I don't deserve anything.
Help me feel your love right now,
To know deep in my heart
That I'm your special friend.

Bible Reading Luke 15:11-32 The Parable of the Lost Son

¹¹ Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. ¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate. ²⁵ "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' ²⁸ "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' ³¹ "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

Talk

Thinking about our reading for today and relationships and unconditional love it occurred to me that I am very relieved that when God created us we too could experience unconditional love. It made me think that if God hadn't done so could the human race eventually die out!
Think about it, Babies are hard work!
Parents have to and need to put the needs of babies first.
And, you do!
As a parent or a carer you end up with no sleep in those early days.
The baby is thriving, well, happy and healthy and developing and you as the parent or carers are totally exhausted!

Sometimes, nature (so from God) and some women 'forget' the worst of labour pains and the disturbed nights and go on to have more babies. If we didn't 'forget' certain things we'd only have one baby! So we wrap those memories and thoughts up and put them firmly into the back of our minds. Until we are rudely reminded when we are blessed having another baby.

Our reading from the parable Jesus told us is about relationships and love of a parent. In the case of the lost son it's the father we hear about. The father is treated badly by the son who had demanded his share of the inheritance, and in effect the son was wishing his father were dead. That is so horrible.

We understand that fathers from biblical times would have cut ties with the son and he wouldn't be accepted back into the family or community. He was an outcast.

But, Jesus tells us of the wonderful welcome home for the wayward son. The father completely and utterly forgives his son and celebrates that once his son was 'dead' and now is alive!

Unconditional love!

The son had learned a very hard but valuable lesson to realise his mistakes. He didn't know if his father would accept him back on his land let alone acknowledge him as his son. His father welcomed him back with open arms and ran to meet him.

His brother was less than impressed the wayward son came home. You can understand his feelings and feel a bit sorry for him. The father felt nothing but love for his lost son and rejoiced.

Unconditional love!

Today, we might have put a yellow ribbon around a tree, a fence or gate as a sign we welcome home a loved one home. We hear of armed forces families doing that when the young people come home. Do you remember that pop song from 1973, 'tie a yellow ribbon round the old oak tree'? It was a huge hit for Tony Orlando and Dawn.

Unconditional love!

We celebrate our mothers today and those women who have mothering skills and have loved us and supported us, like a mother would. We all know women like this and they have been a huge blessing to be part of our lives.

Maybe you have known a special teacher or someone who has inspired you, mentored you, coached you. They are out there!

There are mothers who, due to many reasons, are not able to mother their children. There are mothers who are Foster parents and care and love babies and children where families are in difficulty. There was a piece in the news about some amazing Foster parents who had fostered over 100 children! They had adopted three of them. These Foster parents have an incredible capacity to love!

We think of all the those mothers and mother figures who are no longer with us and we are so very blessed to have had them in our lives.

We also know that Mothering Sunday can be difficult for many people and for many reasons. As Christians we don't forget this and we want to remember these people.

We think of the children who experienced a parent dying when they were young. That is so very difficult.

We must not forget those parents who would have been overjoyed to have been a parent but were not able to be. Many have experienced loss from not been able to conceive, unsuccessful IVF, miscarriage, stillbirth, premature babies, SIDS (Sudden Infant Death), babies and children dying from illness, accidents or disability. God knows how devastating and desperately sad it is to lose a child. It is a reality for many people we know in our families and friends and our churches. We acknowledge their loss and they are in our prayers.

We remember all those mothers and mother figures today and we celebrate them for being part of our lives. For everything they have done for us. We have lovely memories which make us laugh and smile. The things they have done for us are too numerous to list! All the various hats they have on, first aider, nurse, cook, cleaner, teacher, taxi driver, a shoulder to cry on. Someone who gives us a bit of extra money to tied us over. Many have sacrificed a lot for us. They become our friends as we grow up and they are lovely, lovely women. We know they love us unconditionally and we are all better people and Christians for having them in our lives.

Unconditional love!

We thank you one and all! God bless you all!

Hymn Love divine.

Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of Heav'n to Earth come down,
Fix in us thy humble dwelling,
All thy faithful mercies crown;
Jesus, thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation,
Enter ev'ry trembling heart.

Come, Almighty to deliver;
Let us all thy grace receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
Never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve thee as thy host above,
Pray, and praise thee without ceasing,
Glory in thy perfect love.

Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit
Into ev'ry troubled breast;
Let us all in thee inherit,
Let us find thy promised rest;
Take away our love of sinning;
Alpha and Omega be;
End of faith as its beginning,
Set our hearts at liberty.

Finish, then, thy new creation;
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in thee;
Changed from glory into glory
Till in Heav'n we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise!

A prayer of thanksgiving

Generous God,
on this Mothering Sunday, we thank you for mothers, parents and all who care for us.
Love shapes our life.
But none more so than your love, which is beyond any other.
Thank you that you do not leave us wallowing in the mess we make of life but wait patiently for us to come to our senses.
Thank you for your Son, Jesus Christ, who paid for our sin with his immeasurable sacrifice.
Thank you for your Holy Spirit, who keeps us on track.
Thank you that when we return to you, we are always sure of a warm, comforting embrace.
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, thank you for restoring us.

AMEN