

Mothering Sunday - Loving and Caring
14th March
Stephen Partridge

Colossians - 3: 12-17 John 19:25-27

Opening:

Well here we are for another Mothering Sunday, a day when it is traditional to think about our mother church - the church that birthed us which in our case is St George's Oakdale - in previous centuries we would've marched to St George's for a joint service this morning. Nowadays we focus on the Mother's in our families, and all that they stand for. Of course in today's society a mothers role has become more and more varied. Our theme for today is 'Loving and caring' and that goes along way to summing up what it is to be a mother.

Walking together Part I

I wonder what loving and caring looks like in an everyday family, well I need a couple of volunteers to graphically demonstrate community living:

****Volunteers do a 3 legged race around the church.****

So Loving and Caring - living in a community even with our own family can be hard we are constantly pulled one way or another, we cannot always go the way we want to, or at the pace we want to. Actually one of God's greatest gifts to us are other people. Together we walk on our journey of life learning to listen & scold, encourage & forgive, learning to give and accept, protect and let go.

We learn at times to have others depend on us and at times to depend on others.

We are given people to journey with especially in our family. Is it easy because we are related? You know what they say - that you can choose your friends but not your relations. Sometimes it can be fun when we get along together, other times can be hard when like with our 3 legged race people are pulling in different directions.

Paul calls us to bear with one another, he's listing a recipe for community building. To walk in step with others in all our networks - at home, at work, at school. Walking hand in hand but not necessarily eye to eye. and as Janice said last week - 'Loving relationship is the very heart of Jesus' Gospel message, Loving and caring are vital if not **more vital than ever** for our world. We are called to the Christian way of loving and caring for one another - Jesus' way.'

So the challenge is to recognise that God has chosen us to bear with others, forgive others, make choices based on Christ example - What would Jesus really do? What would Jesus say?

Ben and Celeste have had an exciting time during this this term culminating in a fantastic performance on friday night, - Ben can you come and tell us a bit about what's been happening and how you have been building relationships

(Interview with Ben about working with a child from Montacute school)

Thanks Ben - I think it is fantastic that he is being given an opportunity to build links with others across the school community.

Some people jeer at the qualities that Paul is talking about - humility, kindness and what the message version of the bible calls a quiet strength. Perhaps they are threatened by such a dazzling and demanding way of life. Perhaps they see an impossible dream?, Perhaps we see an impossible dream? but Jesus has done more than just left us with a recipe for life - we have an advocate, a supporter, trainer and coach - the Holy Spirit who inspires and encourages us. By his power we can succeed, we can stand up and be counted, we can love and care for those around and begin to build community amongst our varied networks of relationships.

Walking together part 2

But I can see another dynamic at work here - I need one more volunteer to help me graphically demonstrate this

Zac comes to have a shoulder ride (for as long as I can talk and carry him)

We need to live and grow together not just to create a loving supportive community **now**, but in order to mentor and guide others who will sustain the community in the future. We need to bear with the less experienced in order to prepare the next generation, not just by setting an example but by letting them try out and make mistakes, when we can come alongside them and help them.

Paul's guidelines encompass this aspect of apprenticeship too.

To mentor others is to bear with them, to teach and discipline through the wisdom God has passed on to us. And to do all this with Christ's love in our hearts. At first we will need to be patient with what may look messy and untidy. We will also need to be humble enough to accept that a new way, a new idea may be a good way and a good idea even when it comes from someone less experienced. To use a 1000 thousand year old quote used by Isaac Newton a few hundred years ago (and Phil Blake not so many years ago) -

'We are standing on the shoulders of giants'

the giants we stand on are our parents especially our mums and all they did for us, we stand on the shoulders of all the mentors, teachers and leaders that have helped us, and as we grow we become the giants that others may stand on, as they build on our understanding and experience to see further and go higher.

Indeed if we don't mentor others it can leave big holes to be filled in.

I had a lovely chat with my mother-in-law last week, she was telling me about a retired accountant she knew who had recently died. In his retirement he had taken on being treasurer of some of the local charities and when his house was being sorted out they found that he had 15 cheque books for different charities that he was sole signatory for - he had helped lots of people but because he hadn't been able to pass on what he knew, those charities were left with a lot of sorting out.

I think there are many organisations - even churches - that are left hanging by a thread because a lack of accepting and mentoring the next generation.

In my life many people have endured mentoring me - My parents who helped me to walk, read, drive etc. I think of when I started teaching and the experienced teachers who guided me through the first few years of teaching. I think especially of Carrie my wife as she has stood

by me while I learned the art of nappy changing, stacking the dishwasher, emptying the airing cupboard (because I've found it doesn't do itself!) its not been easy for her but by passing on those skills she has helped to share the load too, although I don't always do it quite the same way that she does. At the same time we are- as mother and father- trying to mentor our boys in the mystical ways of the washing up, tidying up , being wise with money, prioritising their time etc.

And now I'm looking at moving into a new area of vocation and again I will need to be mentored as I seek to follow the path I think God had set before me, but at the same time I will be mentoring others. I pray that those who guide me will do so with wisdom and Christ's peace and love in their hearts.

In the Gospels we can see Jesus leading his apprentices who often needed scolding or correction but this was always done in love. He knew that he had not just to come to set an example but to raise up a new generation that would walk his way after he had returned to his father.

In our Gospel reading we see Jesus even guiding from the cross as he joins together his long suffering mum with his beloved disciple. With his final breaths he is building relationships and sowing seeds for the beginnings of the church.

Ending:

What Paul describes and Jesus lives out is a way which will be hard it is hard to follow the way and let's Christ's Peace, Christ's Word and Christ's name be the centre of our life - it takes lots of practice but as we follow closer it will enable us to grow closer to God, This is how we truly live, how we truly become human, not by isolating ourselves and trying to become self sufficient and independent but by building a healthy, sustainable community wherever we are - building bridges instead of walls, granted Jesus described the wise man building his house on the rock but it wasn't so he could isolate himself but instead to welcome in others when the storms came.

We know that Christ Church was born from our mother church of St George's, we are also indebted to Reverend Pogmore and his team who pioneered a church in this community - we are standing on their shoulders as we build and grow together. As we remember all this we can be thankful and also be thankful for all those in our life who have mentored us and are mentoring us to help us live and grow.

I would like to finish by reading the last 2 verses of our Colossians reading from the message paraphrase:

Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness. Let the Word of Christ—the Message—have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God! Let every detail in your lives—words, actions, whatever—be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way.'

Amen? Amen