



SUNDAY MAY 8TH – MOTHERING SUNDAY. MARY – A VIRTUOUS WOMAN

Today is Mother's Day, a day when we celebrate our own mother's influence in our lives. It is the day when we celebrate our wives and daughters, friends, and all of the moms in our lives. As such it is entirely fitting to take a look at the one who bore Christ in her womb to learn from perhaps the most virtuous mother in the Bible; Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Sometimes relationships can be difficult and special days like today can bring up all sorts of different emotions. You may be a person whose mother is no longer alive; or who have lost a child; or maybe a person who did not have a good relationship with their mother and whose families have broken up; or someone who desperately wanted to have children but couldn't through various reasons. Whatever you are sitting with today we all need to be aware, supportive and pray for each other.

Mary probably had dreams of being a mother at some point in her life, however maybe not at the age of somewhere between 14-16 years. She is visited by one of God's angels who said – guess what Mary, you are going to become pregnant and give birth to God's Son. What was her reaction – we read this in

Luke 1:38 – I am the Lord's Servant. May your word to me be fulfilled.

Her trust in God was not theoretical, it was not hypothetical; it was right here, right now. If You send me, Lord I will go. If You call me, Lord I will answer. If this is Your will for me right now today God, then I am Your servant.

May learned from her past

In the case of Mary, she had been a virtuous woman. The angel sent by God told Mary, “You have found favour with God.” Mary looked to her past and rather than being filled with shame over poor choices she had made, though she was certainly not perfect or sinless, she was a virtuous person who honoured God and obeyed His commands in her life. It is important that we remember that the wise person is not someone who makes no mistakes but someone who learns from the past.

What has your past been like? Is it still a hard thing to shake, something you are always trying to live up to or to live down to. Some of us are proud of our pasts, but many of us are prisoners to them. The only proper way to deal with the past is to learn from it.

To stop being slaves to the past, we must make godly choices today. Today is tomorrow’s past, the past is behind us, we are called to choose today, this day, whom we will serve. Present–tense faith, the faith that Mary lived out, is about living in this moment for God, and now in this moment choosing to trust the will of God, not the whims of man; choosing to trust in God’s plan and will for our life, not in our own!

You can try to live in the past or you can try to run from the past; but you can never truly forget the past. Since we cannot leave the past behind, perhaps at least we can learn from it. This is exactly what we are told in:

Hebrews 3:7-8 “The Holy Spirit says – today, please listen, don’t turn a deaf ear as your ancestors did in the wilderness. They watched me at work for 40 years yet refused to let me do it My Way, they tried my patience.”

Mary looked forward to the birth of Jesus as she awaited the fulfillment of the promise of God, but how was it going? When Jesus was born she was young, inexperienced and ostracised because of His conception. Her baby was born far from home in difficult and dangerous surroundings. When she took her son to the temple, only days old, Simeon’s prophecy for His future was both ominous and exciting. He prophesied that a sword would pierce her soul. She then lived as a refugee in a foreign land because the King wanted to kill her child.

Mary longed for what God had Promised.

Mary hoped not in hope, but in the Lord. Her trust did not lie in the belief that belief was enough to satisfy. Mary did not adhere to the modern concept that faith is in and of itself satisfactory or a wise philosophy. Mary knew that faith must have an object. Her object was the God of the promise and her faith was lived out in the moment, in the present-tense.

Hers was not a faith of what God used to do; it was a faith of what God is doing!

Too many of us have stories of what God did in our lives. What is HE doing now?

What is He bringing to pass in our lives that require us to have faith, to trust, not only for what is happening today, but for what will happen tomorrow? God is an active God; our faith must likewise be active! It matters not whether you are 2 or 102; 5 or 55; God has a plan and purpose for your life!

When Jesus was older His public ministry alienated Him from His family as well as the religious leaders. Mary had to learn to put her own feelings to one side to support Him in His mission.

Revelation 21:4 says, “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

“Hope” and “trust” are future-tense verbs. By them we anticipate the promises of God. For the Christian the past is forgiven and the present empowered by what is to come. According to Revelation, our labour for the Lord will be consummated by a “Sabbath rest.” The career of faith has an end of finished work, fulfilled hope, and realized destiny.

Mary chose to live in the Present.

Mary suffered the worst thing that can happen to a mother, she had to watch her son die a long, painful, tortuous death. For a Jew there was no more shameful way to die than to be on a cross. But Mary was there, supporting her son, no doubt with many emotions and thoughts racing around.

Through Jesus’ death, new relationships are created. Even though dying on the cross, Jesus thought of His mother. He looked at His mother and said John is

your son and to John, Mary is your mother. God has adopted us to be His children and to be part of His new, worldwide family. Jesus conquered sin, injustice, violence, hatred and death on the cross through love. This is the foundation upon which His family is built on.

Hebrews 3:14-15 says, “We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. As has just been said: “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.”

The imperative word in this passage is “today!”

Ours is a faith of the present tense, a “here-and-now” religion of what is. It is about conviction and conduct, believing and behaving in response to God’s call. Christianity is a process. There is a sense in which we are ever “becoming” Christian. The church is a family in which we are all to care for one another. There is a sense in which the family of the church is of far greater importance than those smaller, nuclear families.

On this Mothers day, if you are feeling sad, lonely, grief-stricken, even resentful and angry, don’t forget that there is a wider family to which we all belong. A bigger and more important family – a family in which we all can feel ourselves loved and affirmed.

John 13:34 Jesus says: “I give you a new commandment, love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love on another.

In this family we are called to care for one another – for the sick, the bereaved, the young, old and those in between. We are called to care for all and to reflect the love of God that Has been poured into our hearts.

Tomorrow's victories are today's dreams. Yesterday's failures are yesterday's concern. Our concern is for what God wants to do in our lives today!

Our task is to do what is right; the results are in God's hands.

Today, be reminded and encouraged by the present-tense faith of Mary who, when faced with the will of God for her life, answered only, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be as you have said."

PRAYER.

Lord Jesus, You know well the blessing an earthly home can bring. Receive our thanks for all the love we have received in our homes, especially from those who have nurtured us from our earliest years. Hear our prayers for mothers everywhere, that they may never lost heart nor ever be taken for granted but receive from their children the honour and love You showed to Your mother, Mary, even as You were suffering on the Cross.

Bless and keep them all. In Your precious name – Amen.