

Sermon for Mothering Sunday, 10th March 2024

4th Sunday of Lent

By Rev Janet Bayly

Reading from the Old Testament

Genesis 1:1-13

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

³ And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light 'day', and the darkness he called 'night'. And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day.

⁶ And God said, 'Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.' ⁷ So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸ God called the vault 'sky'. And there was evening, and there was morning – the second day.

⁹ And God said, 'Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.' And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry ground 'land', and the gathered waters he called 'seas'. And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ Then God said, 'Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.' And it was so. ¹² The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening, and there was morning – the third day.

Gospel Reading:

Luke 6: 39-43

³⁹ He also told them this parable: 'Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰ The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.'

41 'Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 42 How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye," when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.43 'No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit.

Sermon

Is there anyone here who was baptised in this church? Well today you are especially welcome as Mothering Sunday was historically the day when people returned to their Mother church where they were baptised. Of course, we welcome everyone and particularly mothers. It is also the day when we give thanks for our own mothers and remember all that they have given to us over the years.

One day a father came home from work and as he opened the front door a shock awaited him. There were toys all over the floor; the children were slouched in front of the television with ice cream and crisps; the dogs roamed around obviously unwalked and hungry. Where was his wife? Had she left home or had an accident? He raced upstairs and found her resting on the bed with a book and cup of tea. "Are you ok?" He asked. "I'm fine, " she replied. "But the house, the children, the dogs. What's happened?" She calmly replied: "You know you always ask me what I've been doing all day. Well today I didn't do it!" I can see some smiles!

Today we have the theme of Trees which may seem rather odd as it's Mothering Sunday. Put up tree outline. Ask the children to come and stick on their hand cut outs and bring the tree to life. So how is a mother like a tree? Someone answered me Because I'm old! We are thinking about how important trees are and what qualities they have in common with mothers - get people's ideas. protective, nurturing, reliable, bring forth fruit.....

Little Quiz: What is the tallest tree? A redwood in California 380 feet or 115 m tall (as tall as Blackpool tower)

What is the oldest tree? A bristlecone tree in Nevada 5000 years old. Sadly, Donald Currey accidentally cut it down!

In our two bible readings we have references to trees. In Genesis we have our story of Creation. On the third day God created the land and vegetation, plants and trees. Whether we believe the literal or allegorical portrayal of creation doesn't matter. We know that at sometime in history, our world came into being by the hand of God. We know the beauty and importance of trees to give us food, shelter

and oxygen. We also know that we must do all that we can to preserve them for future generations.

Jesus often used stories, parables to teach people about the nature of God his father. In Luke's gospel he tells people not to judge others. Rather we need to be aware of our own faults first - the speck and the log! And then he speaks of the good tree and the bad tree. Good trees bring forth good fruit and bad trees bad fruit. As we see the news we understand this analogy only too well. Bad people do bad things and good people do good things. But Jesus wants us to look at our own lives. Do we help others, are we compassionate and caring, are we forgiving and non judgemental? Do we bring forth good fruit?

Today as we thank God for our mothers and Mother church, may we be like a solid, dependable and life giving good trees bringing forth good nourishing life enhancing fruit.

When I'm Among the Trees

By Mary Oliver

When I am among the trees,
especially the willows and the honey locust,
equally the beech, the oaks and the pines,
they give off such hints of gladness.
I would almost say that they save me, and daily.

I am so distant from the hope of myself,
in which I have goodness, and discernment,
and never hurry through the world
but walk slowly, and bow often.

Around me the trees stir in their leaves
and call out, "Stay awhile."
The light flows from their branches.

And they call again, "It's simple," they say,
"and you too have come
into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled
with light, and to shine."