



Pastor's Page

Mum's the word

I saw a card in a shop on Friday with the picture of an anxious looking woman on the front. The text said; **“Even when the children leave home you never stop worrying about them as a Mother because there’s always the fear that they might return”** I liked it so much I bought it! It was of course a Mothers Day card and I thought my mum would appreciate the joke. (I’ll let you know!)

History tells us that Mothering Sunday has been celebrated in Britain on the fourth Sunday in lent since at least the 16th century. It is the middle Sunday in Lent (the period of Lent lasting from Ash Wednesday to Easter Saturday not counting the Sundays) and it was also known as Refreshment Sunday or Mid-lent Sunday. Mothering Sunday began as a religious festival where people used to visit their ‘mother’ churches, often a large Parish church or even a cathedral. In the 17th Century Christians went to church on this day to pay their respects to the mother church of their religion. Since everyone came to church on this day it became a kind of family reunion day as well. It was an especially important day in the calendars of apprentices, farm workers and girls in service because it meant that they could return home and share a meal with their parents. They began to bring flowers, usually daffodils, and treats (often baking a special fruit cake) for their mothers paving the way for our contemporary Interflora-flavoured Mothers day.

So what, if anything should we make of this day? Well perhaps it provides us with an opportunity to take stock. Firstly, taking stock of lent itself. If we have given something up for the 40-day period we may, at this halfway point, be feeling the pinch. Well this is nothing compared to how Jesus must have felt in his struggle with Satan in the desert and ultimately on the cross at Calvary. As Rick Warren says in his book *The Purpose Driven Life* **“God’s ultimate goal for your life on earth is not comfort but character development, he wants you to grow spiritually and become like Christ”**. So here’s the first Mothering Day question; “Am I becoming more like Jesus?”

Secondly it is a chance to take stock of our church Family. “What are the good things about us? In what areas do we need to improve?” “How much time and energy do we give to each other in the fellowship?” Are we becoming the loving community that God’s called us to be? On this matter Rick Warren says **“Community is built not on convenience (we’ll get together when we feel like it) but on the conviction that I need it for spiritual health”**. So how spiritually healthy are we?

Finally, back to that card. I know the text is a joke but it presents the picture of a parent with a very different attitude to her children than the picture the Bible gives us of God. In one of the best known and best-loved parables of Jesus, we see a Father waiting eagerly and faithfully for his wayward son to return home. And when the son appears on the horizon the Father runs out to meet him, embraces him, showers him with kisses before organising a massive “knees up”. That’s the picture the bible gives us of God - the perfect parent. So on a day when ‘Mums the word’ lets be radical and focus our thoughts on our heavenly Father and his extravagant love for us.

This could make a refreshing change!

18th March 2007