

Reflection for Mothering Sunday

Given the option to have been able to offer an act of worship this Sunday I would have chosen the following songs and a hymn for Sunday in response to the crisis we face.

First of all the modern Stuart Townend version of “The Lord’s my shepherd, I’ll not want”. Chosen because of that line in the chorus, “And I will trust in you alone”. It strikes me as a good mantra for these times, a phrase to keep on saying over and over again in our heads: “I will keep trusting in you, Lord”. We note our dependency on God *alone*. It is only in God who made this world and everything in it (a world in which viruses exist - and who is nevertheless a loving God) in whom we can always trust.

The first verse of that psalm is so countercultural: “I shall not want”. I shall not want for *stuff*, I shall not want for *things*. The last week or so has brought out both the worst and the best in human nature, in us. The worst: those stockpiling far more than they need for themselves alone, without thought for others. The best: all the offers of help around the village for the vulnerable who have decided to self-isolate at this point, those who simply want their bread for today. “The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want *for anything*” is another good mantra for these times, it is countercultural because it cuts through the accrued levels of consumerism and individualism. More stuff... Me, me, me...

My second song choice would be “Faithful, Faithful is our God” (©1999) by the Hawaiian singer songwriter Joe Camacho. It is a song that Helen and I chose for the day of our son Mark’s baptism - on Mothering Sunday - because we were struck by the line “In love there is no one more faithful than our God” and the tenderness behind the words of the verses. Our God is a tender God, caring like a mother.

And my final choice: “Jesu good above all other, gentle child of gentle mother”. It is a Mothering Sunday classic. But chosen in our particular context because of the last line of the first verse “give us grace to persevere”. It seems eerily appropriate in these unprecedented times: “Lord, help us all to persevere”. And something which will certainly help me in my own persevering is the knowledge that that the BBC will be broadcasting a special service each week across all 39 of their local radio stations. This Sunday it will be led by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

So that’s my message for this week and this Mothering Sunday for all those receiving these flowers, for any who may find yourselves self-isolating this week. It can be helpful when we suddenly have quite a bit of time on our hands to have phrases repeating over and over in our heads to keep our strength up. It’s a trick the desert fathers knew. If in doubt, if tempted (and in all situations) they suggested starting each time of prayer with “O God make speed to save us... O Lord make haste to help us.” An acknowledgement of our need, each day and at every moment, for deliverance.

Lord, I will trust in you alone ... I will keep trusting in you Lord, only you.

The Lord’s my shepherd, I shall not want.

Faithful, faithful is our God.

And with joy we’ll persevere. Amen.

*In love there is no one more faithful than our God
Who brings the light into our darkness
The God who shares the breath of life with you and me
All living things upon the earth*

*In quiet moments God whispers tenderly
The mystery of unending love
For God is good and holds us as we sleep
To wake us to the morning light.*

*The mercy of our God we seek to share each day
To help each other on our way
To be God's hands and heart, God's tenderness and care
God's faithfulness is always there*

*When we share love, we seek to share each day
To help each other on our way
To be God's hands and heart with tenderness and care
God's faithfulness is always there*

Ka Mana'o 'i 'o / Faithful is our God by Joe Camacho

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A link to the song "Faithful, faithful is our God"
can be found if you Google the words "Kamana o io"
or by clicking on the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y--rixZuf1c>

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