

A Mothers' Union

Mothering Sunday

Resource for churches



Contents: children's faith activity and sermon talk notes/meditation. The Service, included separately with this booklet, is designed to be photocopied onto A4 paper and folded in half to make an A5 booklet.

Children's faith activity

Theme: commitment

To set the scene

Before the children arrive, hide an object that is precious to you and ask them to look for it; or start "looking" for something good e.g. biscuits for their treat, and then decide to give up. (The children will surely encourage you to keep looking!) If you have time, the children can take turns in hiding an object for others to find.

Sit round in a circle and ask whether any of them have been separated from Mum or another carer e.g. in the supermarket. What happened? How did they feel when they were alone? How did they feel when they were reunited?

Story: lead into the story of Jesus in the temple with the teachers – Luke 2:41-52

Tell the story to the children. Draw them into the story by encouraging them to become part of the action at the points indicated by italics.

Discuss together the questions in bold – be careful to take seriously all the children's thoughts and ideas.

Imagine the scene:

When Jesus was twelve, he was old enough to go with his family and friends – a huge group of people – to Jerusalem, for the Passover Feast, a special holiday. They'd been to the Temple to remember the occasion when God had rescued his people from their enemies; they'd had a big feast and a wonderful time together – but now it was time to go home.

They all set off together, still enjoying each others' company.

Have you had a good time?

It's been great visiting the Temple – even better, doing that with you.....

At the end of the day Mary and Joseph went to find Jesus for him to get ready to sleep. They were sure he was with his cousins and friends as they all travelled back together. They asked one person and another –

Is Jesus with you? Have you seen Jesus? I thought he was with you.....

But no-one had seen him.

How do you think Jesus' parents felt at this point?

What would you have done if you had been them?

Back they went to Jerusalem, a whole day's journey, and then they spent another day looking for him.

Where do you think they looked? Where would you have looked?

Finally, they found Jesus – in the Temple. He was sitting with the teachers, totally absorbed in talking with them all about God.

Jesus was amazed that Mary and Joseph hadn't realised this is where he would be. To Jesus, being where he could talk about and worship God, was the most obvious place to be!

But he didn't want to give his parents any more worry, so he went back home with them, ready to be guided by them as he grew up.

I wonder why Mary and Joseph kept looking for Jesus?

I wonder how they felt when they found him?

I wonder what might have happened if they'd given up searching?

I wonder what you like best about this story?

Follow up

Jesus' parents were committed to finding him because they loved him; our mothers and carers are committed to looking after us because they love us; God is committed to always being with us because he loves us.

Memory Verse

Jesus says: remember that I am always with you. Matthew 28:20

Give a handkerchief or small square of material to each child. Explain that sometimes people tie a knot in a handkerchief to help them remember something important. Say the verse together a few times; encourage the children to say it to each other. Then let them tie a knot in their handkerchief to take home as a reminder of the verse. You may need to help younger children tie their knots.

Encourage the children to close their eyes, and then ask if they think they are alone? Open eyes then draw out the thought that even though they couldn't see people, they were still there. God is with us always.

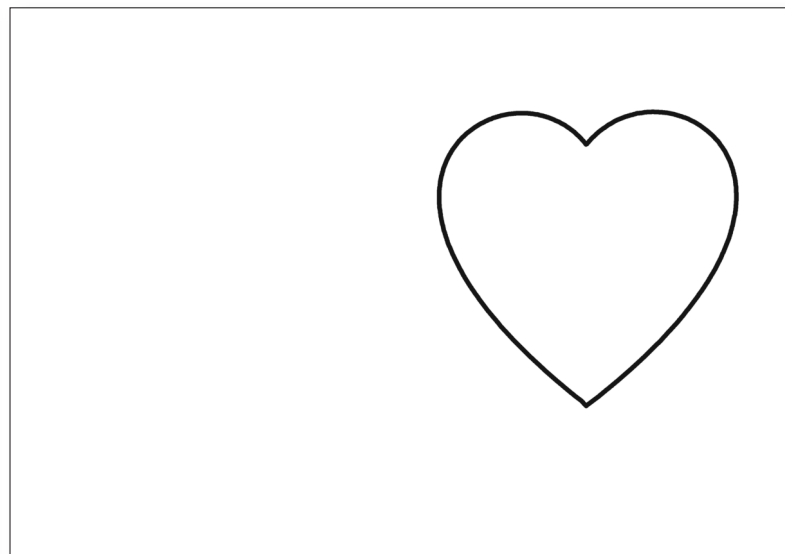
Promise card making activity

When we make a promise we commit ourselves to doing what we've promised. As a treat for Mothering Sunday we're going to make promises to our Mums to thank them for caring for us.

Provide A4 sheets folded in half.

On the cover have printed or write "I promise to..." and on the inside right page draw or print a heart.

Children can draw a picture of themselves on the cover. Children can write their promise inside the heart e.g. *I promise to give you a hug; to tidy my room; to make you a cup of tea; to share my toys with my brother.* Younger children will need help with the writing (or they can draw their promise and a helper can write it). If time, they can decorate the cards with craft materials. Remind the children to sign their name in the card.



Prayers:

Sit in a circle.

Have the children hold their promise cards. Say,

Dear God,

Thank you for our Mums. Please help us to keep our promises to (encourage the children to either say out or think of the promise they've made).

Amen

Ask the children to hold their knotted handkerchiefs and think of times when they're happy, sad, worried, alone, with their family..... After each say together

Jesus says: remember that I am always with you. Thank you Jesus.

Put out into the Deep



I wonder what were the dreams Jocebed and Salome had for their children?

Perhaps Jocebed simply prayed that her son Moses would survive into adulthood; maybe Salome hoped her sons James and John would grow up to be good fishermen, good husbands and fathers, good men. I don't think either could have begun to imagine what God had in store, or the role that they themselves played in the fulfilment of God's plan.

In the Old and New Testaments we are often presented with opposing images of mothers, either the impossibly obedient and faithful Hannah, Anna or Mary, or the relentlessly grasping and manipulative Leah or Herodias.

But here in these two stories we have two mothers who appear much more ordinary, neither great saints nor great sinners, but mothers doing their best for their children, mothers we can understand.

They lived about fifteen hundred years apart but would have shared some of the most ancient traditions and practices of their faith. For both, their trust in the goodness of God and His care for their children underpins their lives and their actions.

They have much to teach us about love, trust and letting go.

Let us look more closely at the mother of Zebedee's sons, the mother of James and John, named Salome in Mark's gospel.

On first reading this story, maybe she does appear a little grasping, approaching Jesus and asking if her sons could be given a place of honour in His kingdom. Perhaps we share the indignation of the other disciples at this apparent arrogance. Perhaps we are pleased with the gentle rebuke in Jesus' answer that only God could grant such a request.

But as usual, the 'back story' gives us a different picture. *What else do we know about her?*

Salome was possibly Mary's sister, Jesus' aunt, and could have known Jesus from His childhood. She was the wife of Zebedee, an apparently prosperous fisherman, and would have had some financial security and standing in the community. She had two sons whom she loved, and for whom she desired the best.

She was on her own journey of faith with God, open enough to recognise His presence in Jesus, humble enough to bow before Jesus even though He might be her own nephew. She was detached enough from her own social and financial security to leave the comfort of her home life and support Jesus practically and financially. She was faithful to Jesus to the end, remaining with Him even to His crucifixion and returning to prepare His body for burial. She was among the first witnesses to the Resurrection.

And on this journey of faith she bore two sons, James and John. Just as she lived her own life in God's service, so she placed her sons in God's care, encouraging them to follow Jesus even though she must have been aware of the risks to them of being associated with this controversial figure. And these sons became two of Jesus' closest companions, James the Greater and John the Beloved, chosen, with the apostle Peter to be with Jesus at the Transfiguration and in the garden of Gethsemane. John went on to write his Gospel and the book of Revelation and will have outlived his

mother, but Salome may well have witnessed the martyrdom of her eldest son James who was executed by Herod Agrippa about ten years after the Resurrection.

So Salome stepped out of the traditional domestic role for women. She put out into the deep waters of a life following Jesus. She embarked on a journey of trust and remained faithful. She showed great personal courage and accepted risk. And she was very courageous as a mother; not simply in approaching Jesus with her question about the afterlife, but in trusting enough to let her sons go, to follow Jesus.

So what does Salome teach us about motherhood and the role of a mother?

Perhaps the key lessons we can learn are fidelity and courage.

Like Salome, in order to be good mothers, we need to be faithful to our own personal relationship with God.

We need to remain attentive to the voice of God in all the decisions of our lives, in order to be attentive to His voice in the decisions we must make on behalf of the children entrusted to our care.

Our love for our children must be faithful and unconditional: we must desire their good in all the circumstances of their lives. We must be willing to allow them to be who they are, not vehicles for our own frustrated ambitions or competitive instincts.

Like Salome, we need to be courageous. In order to mother well, we need to be able to accept the pain as part of the pattern of the joy.

We are called to be fearless in fighting for the good of the children still in our care.

We are called to be fearless in letting go of our children, so that they are free to live fully the life to which they are called, for which they were created.

In answer to Salome's request for her sons, Jesus reminds her, and the disciples, that we are called to serve not to be served. And that this service will make demands of us, we will have to 'drink of the cup' of Jesus, the cup of suffering.

Salome accepted this, she continued in her life of faithful service, and, accompanying the suffering of those she loved, she drank courageously and deeply from the cup.



Mothering Sunday collections or individual donations to the work of Mothers' Union can be sent as cheques, made out to 'Mothers' Union', to our address below.

If you wish to support specific work, for example our worldwide communities work, or the Family Life Programme described in the schools resource, please state this in a separate letter.

All donations to Mothers' Union work directly resource work that makes communities and families safer, healthier, and helps them flourish.

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families

Mary Sumner House 24 Tufton Street London SW1P 3RB
t: +44 (0) 20 7222 5533 e: mu@themothersunion.org

www.themothersunion.org

registered charity number 240531