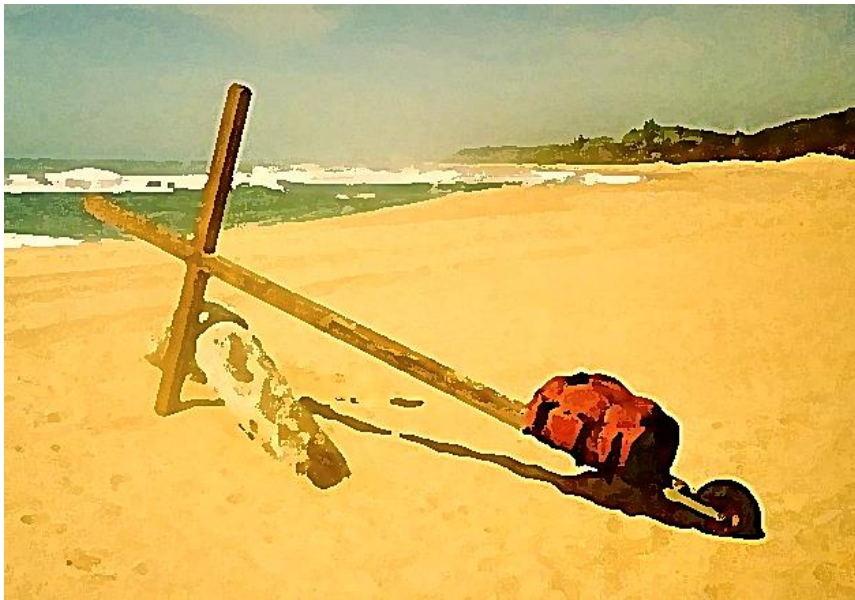




CHURCH OF CHRIST THE CORNERSTONE

Lent Meditations – Week Four

WILL YOU COME AND FOLLOW ME...



Through the weeks of Lent the invitation is there to take a journey with God and with others as we follow the steps that took Jesus to the cross and through the cross to resurrection life. The journey is from where we are now to where God is leading us. We don't always know where the journey will take us, so we can't get the tourist guide book out and pick and choose the sights we want to see. We may take the time to follow where others have led and look at what has been important for them, but more importantly we can take up the invitation to look again at what it means to take that journey as disciples, those who are learning from God and one another as we go.

Will you come and follow me in your close relationships

Mothering Sunday can arouse many emotions: happiness, sadness, anger, frustration, longing. Traditionally the church has used this Sunday in Lent to rest awhile from fasting and penitence; to come back to the mothering of God and of the church as well as our own family relationships.

Mothering

We rejoice in Mothering:

A comforting cuddle, an encouraging smile,
clothing nakedness, sharing sadness,
Inspiring beauty and laughing in joy.

Lord, who forgives our childish ways,

Open our hearts as wide as your mothering arms. AMEN

I Samuel 1:20-28

Hannah conceived and in due time bore a son, whom she named Samuel, 'because', she said, 'I asked the Lord for him.' Elkanah with his whole household went up to make the annual sacrifice to the Lord and to keep his vow. Hannah did not go; she said to her husband, 'After the child is weaned I shall come up with him to present him before the Lord; then he is to stay there always.' Her husband Elkanah said to her, 'Do what you think best; stay at home until you have weaned him. Only, may the Lord indeed see your vow fulfilled.' So the woman stayed behind and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

When she had weaned him, she took him up with her. She also took a bull three years old, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and she brought him, child as he was, into the house of the Lord at Shiloh. When the bull had been slaughtered, Hannah brought the boy to Eli and said, 'Sir, as sure as you live, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. It was this boy that I prayed for and now the Lord has granted what I asked. Now I make him over to the Lord; for his whole life is lent to the Lord.' And they prostrated themselves there before the Lord.

Hannah had to face issues of childlessness. In her culture this made her an object of scorn and pity, despite the love of her husband. It affected all her relationships, including her relationship with God.

- Hannah was so desperate for a child that she was prepared to give her child up to serve God in the temple. What kinds of emotions do you think she would have been going through? Was wanting to wait until the child was weaned just a practical decision or was there more to it than that?
- Samuel was a child who had been promised by God. He goes on to be one of the most influential prophets in the development of God's people. Hannah sees her son once a year and still has some care for him until he is grown up. She goes on to have other children. This isn't the only story in the Bible where there is a 'special' child in a family. Can you think of others and how that may affect the relationships within the family?

Luke 2:33-35

Mary and Joseph brought the child Jesus to Jerusalem to the temple and met with Simeon.

The child's mother and father were full of wonder at what was being said about him. Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'This child is destined to be a sign that will be rejected; and you too will be pierced to the heart. Many in Israel will stand or fall because of him and so the secret thoughts of many will be laid bare.'

This is a short extract from Luke's account of the events following the birth of Jesus. As well as blessing the child and the family, and rejoicing that he has been able to see the one promised by God, Simeon gives a warning of how things will be.

- Mary, unlike Hannah, was not looking to have a child. In her case it was being pregnant while still not married that might have made her a social outcast, but she too has the love of her partner, Joseph. so, although the first promise of a child is to Mary, now they bring him together to the temple. What emotions do you think might have been going through their minds when they heard Simeon's warning?

- **Jesus, too, was a child who had been promised by God. Mary, like Hannah, goes on to have other children. We don't know much about Jesus' childhood, but how do you suppose all of this might have affected relationships within the family?**

Take time to consider:

Both these readings touch on special relationships between mothers and their sons. Samuel and Jesus are both children born in unlikely circumstances, with promises from God. Both mothers had to let their child go. Both fathers are portrayed as having a supportive role in the main drama.

- **Think about your family. You may be thinking of a tight close knit family, or a much wider family. Your relationships with parents, partner, siblings, children and others may be good or problematic. Think of the joys and the tensions and, if you are with others, and it feels safe to do so, share some of that.**
- **Are there aspects of any of your close relationships with family or friends that are a real challenge for you? Are there issues which challenge you as a Christian? This may touch on really personal things for you, so take time to consider this carefully.**
- **What support or resources do you draw on to help you?**
- **What are the ways in which the church supports you? Could there be more?**

If you have time to consider this:

What resources would we need as a church to better support you and others in your family and close relationships.

You may choose to consider these questions as a group, with friends or on your own. If you want to discuss any other aspects further, either talk with the group leader or contact the ministers:

ernesto@cornerstonemk.co.uk or brenda.mosedale@cornerstonemk.co.uk

For further reflection:

You may also like to read the following passages and reflect on them.

Exodus 2:1-10 also II Corinthians 1:3-7; Colossians 3:12-17