

LIPHOOK METHODIST CHURCH
SUNDAY 15 MARCH 2015, 10am
MOTHERING SUNDAY

Readings: Exodus 2:1-10; A Mother Reflects (based on John 2:1-11)

When I was at school there was an annual house competition in public speaking. Someone from each House, usually from the oldest year in the school, the Upper Sixth, had to give a speech on a certain subject which was judged by staff against others.

I remember the year I was in the Upper Sixth that the subject was "Behind Every Great Man there stands a Woman". I remember nothing of what anyone said. But I do remember a friend of mine competing for a different House announcing his title:

Behind every great man there stands a woman

While this is not universally true it is often the case that involved in the success of many great men is a woman who has great influence or provides great support. It is sometimes the case that without the woman that man's success would not have been possible.

Often that woman is the man's wife. An example would be the almost unnoticed role of Clementine in the success of Winston Churchill.

For others the woman with the power and influence, the one who made their greatness possible is their mother. For some there are several women involved one of whom is his mother.

Listen carefully – 2 questions. I want to make sure you can identify in some way with what we're talking about this morning.

Just indicate if you've ever been a mother.

And secondly, Has anyone ever had a mother?

OK so most of us get this from one way or the other, or both.

I thought we'd look at two great men from the bible but particularly the role of their mothers.

Moses is one of those who had several women involved in his background.

The Hebrew midwives we could read about made sure that babies were not killed at birth as ordered by Pharaoh.

Moses' mother obeyed the Pharaoh's instructions that baby boys should be put in the Nile. The obvious intention was that they should drown but she placed him in a basket – good thinking!

The word used for the basket is, incidentally, the same as the word used for the Ark which Noah built at God's command to keep animals and humans safe during the flood.

Moses' sister Miriam was the next woman involved in his survival into childhood meaning that he was actually brought up by his own mother.

And there were Egyptian women involved too from Pharaoh's daughter to the female servants who took Moses out of the water. Pharaoh's daughter – his adoptive mother in a way – was responsible for his being brought up not only by his own mother but also in the Egyptian court where he had privileges and grew in power and influence.

You could argue that it was down to Moses' mother's quick thinking about the basket and hatching the plan to keep him safe that meant the Israelites had a leader with a direct entrance to Pharaoh to lead their bids for freedom.

Moses' mother was responsible for his protection and nurture and with the help of his sister Miriam was also responsible for having him in the safest place possible at the very centre of power.

So what about Jesus' mother?

This episode of the wedding at Cana casts her in a slightly strange light but there's something to Mary in this story that we might have missed or never really spelled out. Mary told Jesus that the wine had run out. Was she just giving information or was she suggesting he do something about it?

He wasn't the steward at the feast so it wasn't his problem. There was no expectation that he was in a position to go down to Sainsbury's or an Off Licence and buy a few more crates of Chateau Plonk to keep the party going.

According to John, who's the only one who records it, this was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory

So why at this wedding in Cana, why then, why not some other time or place?

This looks as though it's not a time or place of his choosing. It looks as though his mother pushes him into it. But hang on a minute, if he hasn't done anything like this before she can't have known that this was something he could or would want to do.

Except that she's his mother.

As a mother she has not only been responsible for his protection and nurture but she has a unique insight into his character and a role in guiding him to fulfil his vocation and calling.

She knows there's something about him – I think that came out in my friend Paul's imaginative retelling of this story – she knows there's something and that's enough to have the faith that whatever he does it will help.

She knows there's something and even after the water was turned into wine neither Mary nor the disciples is quite sure what it is but she can tell it's a sign. It doesn't spell anything out but it gives some clues, it points in the right direction.

Mary – as Jesus' mother – has an insight that this provision of wine, new wine, the best wine relates in some way to his calling in life, his role in the salvation not just of a family who would otherwise be embarrassed by a lack of wine at the wedding but of a nation who are known as God's vineyard.

Notice verse 12 tells us that after this Mary goes with Jesus, his disciples and others of his family to Capernaum. Is she still an impetus behind the beginnings of his ministry?

We won't know this side of heaven, but without getting into too much emphasis on Mary as some of our catholic friends might I think we shouldn't underestimate her influence.

And we shouldn't underestimate the importance and influence of the role of mothers still.

While it might not be true that there's a woman behind the greatness of every great man – or woman for that matter – the role of many great people's mother's has been significant.

What role did your mother play in your protection and nurture, your guiding and direction in life; in what ways did your mother influence you by her questions or suggestions that might have prompted you into your particular calling? In what ways was it your mother who set you in the places where you've flourished as God intends?

If you're a mother, what role did you play in your children's protection and nurture, in guiding and directing them; in what ways have you influenced your children by your questions; how have your suggestions prompted your children into their particular calling? In what ways have you set your children in the place where they've flourished?

What role do you play or have you played in the protection and nurture, the guiding and direction of others; in what ways have your influences, your questions and your suggestions prompted others into their particular calling? In what ways do you help to set others in the place where they flourish?

Spiritually Mothering Sunday teaches us to cultivate an attitude of gratitude – specifically for our mothers. And it is right that we thank them and show our appreciation for our own mothers but also for the mothers amongst us because of the important and difficult and responsible role that they have.

It is also an opportunity for us to realise that we all have aspects of the role of mothers with many people – not as close and not as significant probably but still a role that echoes aspects of the role of a mother in protection and nurture, in direction, insight and support and in guidance

into the places and roles that they will discover are the places and roles in which they will flourish as God intends.