

Heaton Moor United Church Sunday 22nd March Mothering Sunday Worship Materials.

Hi friends,

Hope you are doing well and keep safe at a time like this.

Though we have suspended the worship services at our Churches for time being in accordance with the Government Guidance on Coronavirus pandemic, we haven't stopped being a Church at a moment like this. We as a Church continue to support our community work by spreading #viralkindness around, helping our neighbours, calling on our friends offering pastoral support through #viralprayers and by caring for each other, specially those vulnerable among us. We as a Church are open for personal prayers and for any pastoral help during the week, for we are available to support one another.

As we approach our first Sunday during the suspension of our worship services, we are encouraging people to follow some worship resources to all our Church friends, reaching them electronically, through social media and through print media. Besides those resources, herewith i am sending you a reflection based on the lectionary reading for 4th Sunday in Lent from I Samuel 16:1-13 for this Sunday, 22nd March 2020 titled "Drawing hope by Discerning the Voice of God amidst Fears of Uncertainty." Hoping you will helpful as you reflect and meditate on the readings. The reflection can be browsed on this link: <https://thepattas.blogspot.com/2020/03/drawing-hope-by-discerning-voice-of-god.html>

Be assured of our prayers with you all. Stay safe during these times of uncertainty and look after yourselves. Keep continuing to wait on God and let us together as communities of hope fight this virus out soon. Don't hesitate to call on us if you are in need of any help. Kindly share this mail with all our Church contacts please.

May the healing of God be upon our world and may we all join with Jesus in overcoming this phase of time.

Thanking you,

With warm regards,
raj

Please remember in your prayers: Betty Hickman and Hilda and Bill Willans who had been asked to remembered by Eddie and Deirdre through flowers in church. Take a moment and look at the flowers you can see and think of them.

Drawing Hope by Discerning the Voice of God amidst the fears of Uncertainty

*Reflecting on I Samuel 16:1-13 for 4th Sunday in Lent, 22nd March
2020*

The world today is gripped in fear and uncertainty caused due to the Coronavirus pandemic outbreak, killing around 200,000 people as of today and that number further increasing in leaps and bounds as the clock ticks forward each day. At such a moment like this, what is the message of hope for people and communities across the world today?

The reading from the Hebrew Bible for this Sunday is a passage about the anointing of young David by prophet Samuel (Sam). God strengthens Sam when he expresses a threat for his life from Saul, and continues to lead him to Bethlehem to anoint a new king. When God initiates a conversation with Sam to not get stuck with king Saul but to move on to anoint a new king, Sam replied back to God, "How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me?" (2v) Sam was gripped in fear for his life, as he knew Saul will hunt and kill him, for rejecting him as a king and for moving on to find and anoint another one to be a king.

1. Listening to the Voice of God amidst Fear:

As I read this text in the context of Coronavirus outbreak, I hear these words of fear reverberating from people all around. With the graph of those people dying because of this virus, and it is fast spreading, people in all countries are panicked. When Sam was in utter fear for his life, perhaps even guilty of the politics he has played against Saul, God drove the fear away by leading him with God's voice, with God's ideas and promising him to show God's ways to move on from that situation of fear. Even today into our context of fear, panic and uncertainty, God is willing to drive away the fear through God's voice, through God's ideas and through God's ways. It is time that we wait, listen and respond to God who wants to intervene into our situation and to drive away the fear of the virus and the virus itself. Are we willing to listen to God's voice today? God is speaking to us in various ways, through science, through communities, through neighbourhoods, calling us all not to be selfish and greedy to be generous in sharing and caring for one another. There are many

creative ideas that are being floated in the communities to support one another like #viralkindness #viralprayers, where we find divine in such acts when the virus is spreading virally among communities. The message of hope for a time like this is in the voice of God, which comes in various ways and through various communities. The significance of this text is that God is restoring life in God's own ways, and in this text, God finds it through a new king. Be prepared to listen and respond to God's voice and join with God to virally fight against this virus, for God intends to restore life and to bring back life to its normalcy. Sam experienced such a hope in God's voice, where restoration and renewal finds its home, and Sam moved forward overcoming fears by responding to such a God's voice.

2. Responding to the Voice of God in Courage:

At Bethlehem, Samuel (mis)judges Eliab, the elder son of Jesse to be the one to anoint, until he asks Jesse to bring his youngest son to the fore. It is here that Samuel requests Jesse to bring his youngest and says, "for we will not sit down until he comes here." Sam gathered courage as he kept listening and responding to the voice of God. Again, in the midst of Coronavirus pandemic, I see hope in the communities who are offering help with one another specially to those vulnerable and elderly people. The call for us today is, "we will not sit down until all those vulnerable are helped and protected," "we will not sit down until we defeat this virus," "we will not sit down until the least of our society is cared for." When Sam responded to God's voice, he made a strong resolve to wait and not sit down until he anoints the person God chooses. Sam demonstrated his courage to stand up to the voice of God, and never gave up to sit down or gave up on God's appointment. So, it should be our resolve to support those people who are self-isolating and co-operating with one another to fight out this virus, for we will not sit down and not give up on God's ways and God's interventions at our context today.

3. Opening up to the Voice of God in Humility:

On this mothering Sunday, I hear the mothering voice of God when God speaks back to Sam after his misjudging the person God wants to anoint. God speaks in verse 7, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord

does not see as the mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” These words cannot be but the words of a mother. To any mother her child is very special, no matter how the child looks or appears. We have a saying in my language Telugu *Kaki ki kaki pilla muddhu*, which means “for any crow her baby chick is extra special.” For a mother all that she cares is her child, for it is the mortals who care about the outward appearance and judge people accordingly. From this voice of God, we infer that for a mothering God all that matters to her is her child and her heart. This mothering God doesn’t care about the judgements of people, for the yardstick of a mothering God is totally different and yet times opposite to human standards. At a crisis moment like this when the fear of Coronavirus is taking over as a global pandemic, this mothering God is opening her arms to embrace and comfort all those self-isolating and waiting for the vulnerable to embrace and grant solace. This mothering God doesn’t see people as humans see, for a mothering God always cares for God’s children. Time to open up to the mothering voice of God in all humility, for God as a mother is speaking to us, wanting and waiting to embrace all her children, specially the vulnerable people and to those people who are out there in the field caring for the other flocks of sheep.

Final Drops:

Lastly, lest we forget 22nd March is observed as World Water Day, and the theme for 2020 is ‘water and climate change,’ inviting us to explore the inextricable link between water and climate change. Let us all prayerfully reflect on the gift of water and strive to be sensitive in using water, for many in the world today are going thirsty due to the lack of accessible safe drinking water. During this Coronavirus climate, the mantra has been, “wash, wash and wash,” which is an important precaution that everyone needs to take care and do it. However, out there in the world there are millions who do not have water to drink and how can they afford to wash and wash and wash their hands to be safe? For many poor people with no water or clean water resource – what would they wash with. How would they pay for their use of this water to wash-wash-and wash? This day invites us to be sensitive to water and calls us to fight for water justice, where water is available for all people in the world. The living waters Jesus

Christ is inviting us to strive for justice and peace to flow down like rivers into our contexts in becoming hope to this thirsty world. Let us find hope in the voice of God and let us be hope by responding to the voice of God, for God is speaking to us every day.

Rev. Dr. Raj Bharat Patta,

20th March 2020

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Prayer: Our mothering God, we thank you for assuring us that you in Jesus is present where 2 or 3 are self-isolating during this crisis of Coronavirus pandemic. Embrace us under your wings as the mother hen covers her chicks, and help us to experience calmness, comfort and warmth of love during these times of fear and uncertainty. Like a mother help us to care for one another at a moment like this, and journey with us during this time, so that together as a community we can overcome this pandemic. Specially remembering the vulnerable and the elderly during this time and seek your guidance and peace to all of us. We thank you for being our mother O God. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

@rajpatta

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MOTHERING SUNDAY

22nd March 2020

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Prayer

Here we are Lord, we have come –we have come in body, mind and spirit, to worship you this day, even if we are worshipping in a different way from our usual Sunday.

We have come, needy, hopeful, tired, joyful, broken and optimistic. However we have come, we have come to meet with you.

We have come,

Come Lord Jesus. Amen.1

370 STF – Breathe on me, Breath of God https://youtu.be/_kmFm48Kloc

Prayer

God our provider, we look to you for rest and seek after you today.

[Pause]

May you refresh and renew us by your Spirit of power and inspiration. We place our trust wholly in you and ask that you might light the path before us.

Lead us Lord during this time of worship. Guide your church so that we might trust in your guidance and wisdom.

[Pause]

For the times of struggle we have faced this week and even this day we rely on your presence to dwell deep inside of us. For those that are facing those struggles today, we ask that you might be present for them today.

Nourish and enrich our souls in worship this day.

Might heaven touch earth as we see an overflow of your grace.

Give us eyes to see you Lord,

Give us ears open to hear from you, and give us hearts open to receive from you,

In Jesus' name, Amen.2

Bible reading: 1 Peter 3:4

You should clothe yourselves instead with beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God.

A Reflection for Mothering Sunday

When my children were babies, people would say things like;

‘Cherish every moment, they grow up so quickly’

And I would find it hard to cherish the broken nights, the dirty nappies, the cracked nipples, and conversations about weaning and potty training.

But everyone who held a door open for me, helped me on the bus, paid me a compliment, encouraged me and uplifted me has been part of my mothering. It is hard work being a mother - the toll it takes on our bodies, the worry about our

children's health, development, education, friendships, faith. But you loving God, are with us in our mothering and our being mothered. You are with all mothers who give birth alone, scared, hungry, in prison or in a refugee camp. You are with all who miss their mothers, all who find relationships with their mothers difficult, and all those who are separated from their mothers.

You knitted us together in our mother's womb, writes the Psalmist. From the casting on of our being, our utter dependence on our own mothers and as our independence has increased your care for us has never wavered.

You have watched us take our first steps on our own, follow our own paths, celebrated our successes and cried at our disappointments. Like awkward teenagers we have shouted at you, ignored you, challenged your advice and help, but you have never stopped loving us.

So, on this Mothering Sunday, whether we are mothers ourselves or not, whether we have the opportunity to celebrate with our own mothers or not; we allow ourselves to be surrounded by your love, the mothering God who cares, nurtures, feeds and loves us and we say thank you.³

Hymn 440 STF – Amazing Grace – how sweet the sound <https://youtu.be/21G3JMYwAiA>

Prayers of Intercession and Blessing

In these uncertain times, dear Lord, we pray for peace.

We hold before you all those who are putting others before themselves.

We pray for those who are worried about their financial situation, not knowing how they will cope in the coming weeks.

We pray for the people and situations close to our heart...

We hold before you the governments and leaders of the world, those making many difficult decisions...

So in these uncertain times may we reach out to support each other, our families, our friends, our neighbours.

May we speak using words of grace and comfort.

May we reflect your love for all of creation

And may we be a reassurance and a blessing to all we speak to this week.

And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you this day and forever more. Amen

1 Prayers by Tim Baker

2 Opening prayers written by Matthew Forsyth

3 Mothering Sunday reflection by Christine Dutton

4 Intercessions and blessing Wayne Grewcock