

Lent Sermon Series 2014

4th Sunday in Lent, 30th March

Mothering Sunday

St John's Kidlington, 9.30am

Revd Felicity Scroggie on ***The Prayer of the Church***

Mothering Sunday:

a day of thanks for the care, nurture and teaching of the church. Although this was a day when girls in service were released to go home and picked flowers along the journey for their mothers, it is not really a festival about Mums. The Mother Church is the context for our nurture, growth, faith, and belonging to Christ and each other.

The Need to Belong:

is the most fundamental human yearning. We find our identity not in isolation but in society, nationality, community, family. The church is the body of Christ and the family where we as brothers and sisters find our common identity through baptism into Christ. As Christians we NEED each other and we BELONG together young and old, richer and poorer, stable and struggling, more and less educated, equally sinful. We get to heaven together or not at all.

When a coal is take out from the fire it soon cools down and loses its capacity to burn. The church is the family and the context where we learn how to love, serve, pray, and grow in discipleship. There is no such thing as a solo Christian!

The Prayer of the Church:

- 1) The gathering of the church family on Sunday to pray shoulder to shoulder in public. The form of prayer may not be as we would individually choose, (we might choose silence, but 'what I get out of it' is not the point, even in our consumerist society. It is important for the church family to come before Go around the altar and offer praise, thanks, intercession, proclaim the word of God aloud, receive teaching, and share bread and wine.

- 2) The morning and evening offices, based on a cut down version of the monastic offices using set passages of scripture, prescribed prayers, and especially the psalms.
- 3) Prayers with set words: collects, liturgical forms containing the wisdom of the years and other Holy people.

When we pray as part of the church we know that **we do not pray alone**: 'As o'er each continent and island the dawn leads on another day, the voice of prayer is never silent, nor dies the strain of praise away'. The prayers of others lift us up and encourage us; liturgy reminds us that the prayers of the saints as a cloud of witnesses take our prayers into the heavenly places 'with angels and archangels evermore praising thee and singing holy holy...'

Terry Waite:

in captivity he was sustained by the deep sense of others praying for him, and the words of the BCP learned in earlier life by heart, especially the evening collect, 'Lighten our darkness...'. 'I never engaged in extempore prayer during that time. I felt that if I did I would begin to go down a sort of one way track, reveal my own psychological vulnerability, and just get into the business of saying, 'O God Get me out of here' which isn't prayer at all. That's just being a child.'