



FOCUS ON FAITH

Stephen G. Derges, Pastor of Bridgnorth Baptist Church



LET'S HEAR IT FOR MUMS!

The BBC regularly comes in for criticism – from editorial impartiality (or lack of it) and the monopoly status it enjoys through licence fee funding, to the spiralling costs with building projects as well as executive and performers' remuneration and such like. But there's one area where the Corporation receives almost universal acclaim – in the making of period drama.

Whether it's an adaptation of a Charles Dickens' classic or a more obscure historical novelist, the expertise and reputation of the BBC for high quality acting, direction and production is unparalleled and earns much needed income from worldwide sales.

And whilst I know these dramas are only stories one of their attractions for many people is the insight they give into

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times past and how culture, attitudes and practices have changed over the years. For instance, recent episodes of "Larkrise to Candleford" have graphically highlighted the inequality between the sexes and the way in which society was dominated by the "aristocracy" who made all the rules because they were the ones who had the financial clout to dictate standards and customs. Thankfully men and women of courage and insight campaigned for better working and living conditions and whilst we know we still haven't yet accomplished all that needs to be done to eradicate social inequality, our lives are a far cry from what is depicted on our screens every Sunday evening which many experienced in reality just a few decades ago.

This Sunday we celebrate what has become known (in popular terminology) as "Mother's Day". Many of us take the opportunity to send a card, a bunch of flowers, a box of chocolates or some other gift to our mums in recognition and appreciation of what they have done for us – but that's not how it started.

In fact no-one really knows how it started (there are a number of theories which I won't bore you with) but from the Middle Ages and even right up to 19th Century days, many children, especially those from poorer backgrounds didn't enjoy a terribly good childhood. Often boys, some from the age of 10 or 11, were apprenticed to craftsmen or, as with many girls, worked as "live-in servants" on a pittance of a wage. They were allowed just one day's holiday a year in early spring on which they could visit their parents although for some even that wasn't possible due to long distances and virtually no transport facilities.

In Church tradition this Sunday – the fourth in Lent – is known by a variety of names including "Mothering Sunday"

to recognise the practice of people making a pilgrimage to the place where they were baptised as an infant. This would often be the nearest Cathedral – the Mother Church of the diocese – to which they'd return annually to renew their commitment to God. It's also known as "Laetare Sunday" (from the Latin for "rejoicing") as well as "Refreshment Sunday" – a special day of celebration when the children were home so the practice of fasting from some meals or special foods during Lent could be suspended for one day only.

Okay enough of the history lesson – what's the point? There are a number actually:

- Celebrating with family and enjoying a break from the routine is a wonderful benefit many of us don't fully appreciate
- There's a place for regularly renewing our commitment to God even in our increasingly secular society
- Recognising the importance of respecting and valuing those who have made our world a better place hopefully spurs us on to work for the benefit of future generations
- Eliminating inequality and other social discrimination is a seemingly never-ending task. We still have slavery, people trafficking and child exploitation in many parts of the world

But the really important issue for me is that we need to value our mothers – after all we wouldn't be here without them! The Bible specifically encourages us to "honour our father and mother" – it's one of the Ten Commandments and it brings a promise – long life.

There's an old Jewish saying (you'll probably see it on a china mug in a shop somewhere): "God could not be everywhere, so He made mothers". Now I don't agree with the theology but somehow I do concur with the sentiment. Mums are very special people – they had to look after us before we were born – and often make sacrifices on our behalf. We know they are not always perfect (who is?) and of course they make mistakes, but honouring them, appreciating them, thanking them and yes even pampering them should be a regular event not just a once a year job.

Let's hear it for Mums, not just this Sunday, but every day!

To find out more about the Christian faith and resources available plus information on local Churches together with contact details, please log on to www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk.