

# **Sermon on Wednesday 18 March 2026**

## **by Rev. Bill Church**

*Readings: Genesis 21. 8-19, Matthew 23.37-39*

### **Mothering**

We used to keep chickens and, one time, a friend who wanted to raise ducks brought along some fertile duck eggs which we put under a broody hen.

In due course, they hatched and the hen did what mother hens do - fluffed up her plumage so she was about twice the size to make a nice warm safe place for the brood under her feathers and went round with a special sort of clucking to keep them all in touch.

The ducklings being ducklings soon headed off into the bowl of water we provided, much to the consternation of the hen who clucked even harder.

They were not biologically her offspring, and they were not behaving like good chicks ought to, but she was still mothering them.

That is the image Jesus wanted us to conjure up in our minds.

The people of Jerusalem were not literally his chicks, nor were they behaving entirely as they ought, but Jesus wanted to mother them.

There are plenty of paintings and stained-glass windows showing Jesus as a shepherd (including one in St Andrew's), but I have not yet seen one showing him as a mother hen, which is a pity.

Curiously maybe, Jesus did not have an entirely positive view about literal motherhood. On one occasion he was told his mother and brothers had come to call him away from his preaching, maybe to protect him from the risks of his ministry and he said: "Who are my mother and my brothers? Whoever does the will of God they are my brothers and my mother."

And, famously, he warned his followers that they might have to leave their parents and families.

Jesus was talking about mothering – loving and taking care. In church, this was Mothering Sunday; outside, it was more prominently "Mothers' Day", which can look like an invented commercial opportunity but also genuinely celebrates motherhood.

As does the bible in the story of Hagar.

She was disgracefully treated by Abraham and Sarah and sent off into the desert with her young son, Ishmael.

When food and water ran out, she did what she could for him. She put him in the shade of a bush and then lifted up her tears and prayers to God, who acted to save them.

This resonates with the stories of many mothers desperately protecting their children, not least now in the Middle East, Sudan and too many other places.

This season, then, is a chance to recognise, honour and give thanks both for mothers and what they do. And also for all who have mothered us or others.

It is worth remembering that everyone, however strong, successful and self-reliant was once a helpless infant, 100% dependent on their mother and others who mothered them.

Nobody should be too proud to acknowledge this, humbly and thankfully.