

What do our lives reflect?



Lord Jesus Christ, we depend on your mercy, as we ask you to forgive us our sins and cleanse our hearts, that we may reflect your love in the way we live our lives day by day. Amen.

Motherhood in the Bible

Part II – five scandalous mothers

by Becky Mynett

Becky Mynett continues her series about motherhood in the Bible.

Matthew's Gospel opens with the "genealogy of Jesus the Messiah" a list of forty-two fathers from Abraham to Joseph. Aside from Mary, just four mothers are mentioned, and they are not the virtuous matriarchs you might expect.

Firstly, there is Tamar who, after marrying two brothers without

bearing a child, bore twins to her father-in-law. Next we have Rahab the prostitute. In the book of Joshua she helped Joshua's spies and was spared with her family when Jericho was destroyed. She gave birth to Boaz, who married Ruth, who has a whole book named after her. Like the others, she was a foreigner and, although perhaps less scandalous, she laid at Boaz's feet to gain his attention, which was hardly usual. The fourth mother is Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, who was essentially raped by King David (2 Samuel 11), who then had her husband killed so he could marry her.

These women are all in some way outsiders and are at the mercy of men. But God works through them, as he works through Mary, a not-yet-married teenager who was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ☺

Ricarda Witcombe *reflects on* John 2:13-22

In days gone by the cleansing of the Temple was seen by the Church as a symbol of the purification of candidates preparing for baptism on Easter Day. Christians are to be temples in which God's Spirit dwells. It sounds wonderful, but uncomfortable, because we too may need some cleansing. Jesus' anger shows his deep love and passion – his zeal – for his people. This is not about defending religion. It is about what our lives reflect – do they really reflect love for God and for our neighbour? Or do they reflect something else?

We see Jesus expose the way human beings and societies exploit others to make and save money for themselves, instead of

using it for the good of all people. This is an inversion of the way God wants people to live. No wonder Jesus is angry – religious people have so missed the point of life in all its fullness; they are neither living it themselves nor enabling it for others.

We are called today to look with fresh eyes at how we live, at what happens within our churches and within our own lives. What values are reflected in us? Are there ways in which we could, for example, see our material resources, our time and our worship as gifts to be shared rather than things to be defended? Can we open our hearts to God's cleansing today, trusting in God's mercy as we commit, again, to following? ☺

Figures from the Common Worship lectionary

Edward King, "The Bishop of the Poor"

by Julian Smith

Edward King (1829-1910), who is commemorated tomorrow in the *Common Worship* lectionary, was a college chaplain, principal, then Professor of Pastoral Theology before being appointed Bishop of Lincoln in 1885.

All who met him were struck by his humility and his pastoral care. He tried to shape his ordinands as people of prayer and compassion, qualities he exemplified in his own life. When appointed to Lincoln, King wrote, "I shall try to be the Bishop of the Poor. If I can feel that, I think I shall be happy."

His example offers us encouragement in these post-Covid times. Church members need humility in accepting that the experience of church goes far beyond our cherished buildings and Sunday worship. We need grace as we seek to discover what it means to be a practical, caring Church, the Body of Christ in and for a changed world. With God's help we can follow Edward King's example. ☺

“There is no limit that can be set to our growth in our Godward life, since the good has no limit.”

Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335-395), theologian