

Welcome to 'Open Space'
Mothering Sunday 2026

Bathsheba's Story



Bathsheba's story may resonate in unexpected ways.
Please sit wherever you feel most comfortable
and feel free to move if you wish.

If you, or someone you know,
has been impacted by abuse or has concerns,
please speak to our Safeguarding officer
Yo Davies: 07865664451 safeguarding@kidhp.org.uk
or the Diocesan safeguarding team : 01865 208295.
Safeguardingreferrals@oxford.Anglican.org

Opening Music: "Hallelujah" by Leonard Cohen

Grace mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you

And also with you

Leonard Cohen's song discovers that there are many types of "Hallelujah," – broken ones and holy ones in times of loss, brokenness, penance, mourning, celebration, or reconciliation. Cohen draws on the stories of David and Bathsheba and Delilah and Samson to explore these human themes.

On Mothering Sunday our "Hallelujah" may be a shout of joy and thanks within our families, or for those of us who find the day a painful one our "Hallelujah" may be a broken one. Certainly, God receives them all with equal love.

We tell the story of Bathsheba, who was young, attractive, used and abused by a powerful man, without choice, and doubly bereaved. Often held up as an example of a survivor she remains blessed by God, becomes mother and teacher of King Solomon, honoured as the Queen Mother and advisor, included in Mathew's gospel as part of Jesus's lineage, and honourably named "Daughter of the Oath".

We will present Bathsheba's story in three parts, within a Eucharist where we gather around God's table as broken people on the way to being made whole. The altar holds our histories and our hope; here, like Bathsheba, we are known and beloved.

Part 1 – Bathsheba’s Pain
Gathering Prayer for Wholeness:

**O God,
Giver of Life,
Bearer of Pain,
Maker of Love,
You hold together in your love
All our histories,
All our loving,
All our joys,
All our brokenness.
Reconcile us through your body, broken for us,
And your blood, which is forgiveness,
That we might be whole,
And free to love ourselves and others
Amen.**

Reading: 2 Samuel 11.2-5

It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king’s house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, ‘This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite.’ So David sent messengers to fetch her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, ‘I am pregnant.’

Reflection:

What themes can we see in the story so far?

Song:

Christ's is the world in which we move.
Christ's are the folk we're summoned to love,
Christ's is the voice which calls us to care,
and Christ is the One who meets us here.

*To the lost Christ shows his face;
to the unloved He gives His embrace;
to those who cry in pain or disgrace,
Christ, makes, with His friends, a touching place.*

Feel for the people we most avoid.
Strange or bereaved or never employed;
Feel for the women and feel for the men
who fear that their living is all in vain.
To the lost..

Feel for the parents who lost their child,
feel for the woman whom men have defiled.
Feel for the baby for whom there's no breast,
and feel for the weary who find no rest.
To the lost...

Feel for the lives by life confused.
Riddled with doubt, in loving abused;
Feel for the lonely heart, conscious of sin,
which longs to be pure but fears to begin.
To the lost...

Story-Telling – What David Does Next.... And What
Happens to Bathsheba's family.
David does many things and we get to know lots about
how he feels. Psalm 51 is David's song of repentance
for these actions.

At this point Bathsheba isn't given a voice and we don't know how she feels. Later things will be different...

Penitence with Music: *Pavane for a Dead Princess* by Gabriel Faure.

A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

**Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt-offering, you would
not be pleased.
The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not
despise.**

And Absolution: (*Isaiah 40.1-2; Amos 5.12*)

'Comfort my people,' says our God. 'Comfort them! Tell them they have suffered long enough and their sins are now forgiven. Come to me and you will live.'

God forgives you.

Be at peace.

Be well.

Song:

As the deer pants for the water
so my soul longs after you;
you alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.

You alone are my strength, my shield;
to you alone may my spirit yield:
you alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.

I want you more than gold or silver,
only you can satisfy;
you alone are the real joy-giver
and the apple of my eye.

You're my Friend and you're my Brother
even though you are a king:
I love you more than any other,
so much more than anything. *Martin Nystrom*

Prayers for God's People and God's World
After each petition please respond
Mothering God,
hide them in the shadow of your wings

Part 2 – Our Healing around God’s Table

The Prayer of Thanksgiving for Mothering Sunday
by Janet Morley

God is here

Her Spirit is with us

Lift up your hearts

We lift them up to the Lord

Let us give thanks and praise

It is right to give thanks and praise

Eternal Wisdom,
Source of our being,
And goal of our longing,
We praise you and give you thanks
Because you have created us women and men,
Together in your image
To cherish your world and seek your face.

Divided and disfigured by sin,
While we were yet helpless,
You emptied yourself of power,
And took upon you our unprotected flesh.
You laboured with us on the cross,
And brought us forth
To the joy of resurrection.

Therefore with the woman who gave you birth,
The women who befriended you and fed you,
Who argued with you and touched you,
The woman who anointed you for death,
The women who met you, risen from the dead,
And with all your lovers throughout the ages
We praise you saying:

**Holy, holy, holy, Vulnerable God,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory;
Hosanna in the highest.**

Blessed is our brother Jesus,
Who, before his suffering, earnestly desired
To eat with his companions
The Passover of liberation;
Who on the night that he was betrayed,
Took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and said
"This my body, broken for you.
Do this to remember me"
Jesus's broken body is for the healing of our
brokenness

In the same way, also the cup after supper, saying:
"This cup is the new covenant in my blood
Shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this whenever you drink it, to remember me."
Jesus's shed blood is for our forgiveness.

In the body broken and the blood poured out
We restore to memory and hope
The broken and unremembered victims
Of tyranny and sin;
And we long for the bread of tomorrow
and the wine of the age to come.

Come then life-giving Spirit of our God,
Brood over these bodily things,
And make us one body with Christ;
That we may labour with creation
To be delivered from its bondage to decay
Into the glorious liberty of the children of God
Amen

The Prayer that Jesus Taught Us:

**God, lover of us all,
Most holy one,
Help us to respond to you
To create what you want for us here on earth.
Give us today enough for our needs;
Forgive our weak and deliberate offences,
Just as we forgive others
When they hurt us.
Help us to resist evil
And to do what is good;
For we are yours,
Endowed with your power
To make our world whole. Amen**

Receiving Communion:

The broken Body of Christ and Christ's poured out
Blood are our healing and acceptance.

Part 3: Bathsheba Honoured

Story-Telling:

Bathsheba the mother,
A strong woman with agency, influence and wisdom,
Queen Mother, in the line of Jesus.

Reading: Proverbs 31.... is written by Bathsheba!

*Bathsheba is giving advice to her son, King Solomon
about how to conduct himself (wine and women were
indeed his weaknesses), and then about how to find a
good wife. In groups or on your own consider:
How do you see Bathsheba now?*

The words of King Lemuel. An oracle that his mother taught him:

No, my son! No, son of my womb! No, son of my vows!
Do not give your strength to women,
 your ways to those who destroy kings.
It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink
wine, or for rulers to desire strong drink;
or else they will drink and forget what has been
decreed, and will pervert the rights of all the afflicted.
Speak out for those who cannot speak,
 for the rights of all the destitute.
Speak out, judge righteously,
 defend the rights of the poor and needy.

A capable wife who can find?
 She is far more precious than jewels.
The heart of her husband trusts in her,
 and he will have no lack of gain.
She does him good, and not harm,
 all the days of her life.
She rises while it is still night
 and provides food for her household
 and tasks for her servant-girls.
She considers a field and buys it;
 with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.
She girds herself with strength,
 and makes her arms strong.
She opens her hand to the poor,
 and reaches out her hands to the needy.
Strength and dignity are her clothing,
 and she laughs at the time to come.
She opens her mouth with wisdom,
 and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

Her children rise up and call her happy;
her husband too, and he praises her:
'Many women have done excellently,
but you surpass them all.'
Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,
but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.
Give her a share in the fruit of her hands,
and let her works praise her in the city gates.

According to 1 Kings 2:19, she was honoured as trusted advisor and, in some interpretations, a "partner" to the king's administration. Her position as the queen mother seated at the right hand of her son may even be seen as a prefiguration of Mary as Queen of Heaven.

Reading: When Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him for Adonijah, the king stood up to meet her, bowed down to her and sat down on his throne. He had a throne brought for the king's mother, and she sat down at his right hand.

Song: *I Will Sing a Song of Love during which we distribute the flowers for Mothering Sunday.*

*I will sing a song of love
To the one who first loved me
And I'll sing it as a child of God
Who is named and known and free.
For the love of God is good
It is broad and deep and long;
And above all else that matters,
God is worthy of my song.*

And I will not sing alone, but with earth and sky and sea,
For creation raised its voice well in advance of me.

And I'll sing with every soul, every language every race,
Which proclaims this world is good
For God has blessed this lace.

And I'll sing for what is right
and against all that is wrong,
Because God is never neutral who inspires my song

As I bring to God my joy, so I'll bring to God my pain
For there is no hurt which God
Requires me to retain.

While my life on earth still runs,
May my song to God be given,
Till through grace I join the harmony
Of all in heaven.

The Holy Gospel According to Matthew
with a significant line for us all to proclaim!

An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the
son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father
of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his

brothers..... And David was the father of Solomon **by**
the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of

Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah,

So all the generations from Abraham to David are
fourteen generations; and from David to the
deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from
the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen
generations.

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you O Christ**

Blessing and Dismissal:

Response: **Let it be.**

Amen. Amen. Amen.