



God's Special Guarantee

**Eph 1:13-20
(& Mothering Sunday)**

What Sunday is it today? Mothering Sunday. Did you do something special for Mum? Here are a few things that you may have done.

It's not so in everywhere other than Britain. It's not Mothering Sunday in America – they have their Mother's Day later in the year. How come?

Today is the 4th Sunday in Lent. Lent is a time of the year when the church remembers the time Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days and in church tradition it was a time to fast and pray. Most people gave up certain types of food during Lent – a tradition kept in many churches today but not usually in Baptist ones! It was intended as a preparation for Easter. But the 4th Sunday in Lent was a “day” off where people were allowed to break their fast a bit. People were allowed to eat sweet food. In England they baked a special fruit cake called Simnel cake. As a result the 4th Sunday in Lent became a joyful day. It was called Laetere Sunday – a Sunday for rejoicing. Another word was Refreshment Sunday and at other times was known as Bright Sunday – a today of rejoicing and laughter after a few weeks of dull food. Some Americans call it Holy Humour Sunday.

What has this got to do with Mothering Sunday you may ask? Just this. In the seventeenth century, a tradition arose whereby Masters of domestic servants would allow them a day off to go and visit their mothers and take them a Simnel Cake on Bright Sunday, the 4th in Lent. That became known as Mothering Sunday and the 4th in Lent has been celebrated as Mothering Sunday where we show appreciation for our Mums and give thanks to God for them and for motherhood.

So in recognition of this being Mothering Sunday and Bright Sunday – or for that matter, Holy Humour Sunday, I give you this little presentation which Simon has produced.

A mother was explaining to her young children how they should behave during a church service. She asked them, ‘Why is it important to be quiet in church?’ Her bright little daughter said, ‘Because people are sleeping.’

A mother had been teaching her three-year-old son the Lord's prayer. For several evenings at bedtime, he would repeat after his mother the lines from the prayer. Finally, he decided to go solo. His mother listened with pride as he carefully recited each word, until he got to: ‘Lead us not into temptation,’ he prayed, ‘but deliver us some e-mail.’

Laughter is a key ingredient in our family lives. I expect most of the children here and the adults who still have their mothers living have done something special for Mothering Sunday and the whole thing is a way of saying thank you.

We're going to do that now as we say prayers to thank God for mothers and motherhood.

**Loving God, we thank you for the gift of laughter.
May our laughter never be unkind.
But help us to laugh with joy, and bring joy to others.
And as we celebrate Mothering Sunday,
help us especially to bring joy to our mothers.**

**We thank You O Lord for giving us others to share in our lives:
For parents, and the love which brought us to birth:
We praise you, O Lord;
and bring you thanks today.**

**For mothers who have cherished and nurtured us:
We praise you, O Lord;
and bring you thanks today.**

**For fathers who have loved and supported us,
We praise you, O Lord;
and bring you thanks today.**

**For brothers and sisters with whom we have shared our home:
We praise you, O Lord;
and bring you thanks today.**

**For children and their parents:
We praise you, O Lord;
and bring you thanks today.**

**For other relatives and friends, who have been with us
in our hopes and joys and times of sadness:
We praise you, O Lord;
and bring you thanks today.**

**For all who first spoke to us of Jesus, and have drawn us
into the family of our Father in heaven:
We praise you, O Lord;
and bring you thanks today.
Help us to live
as those who belong to one another,
and to you, our Father, now and always. Amen.**

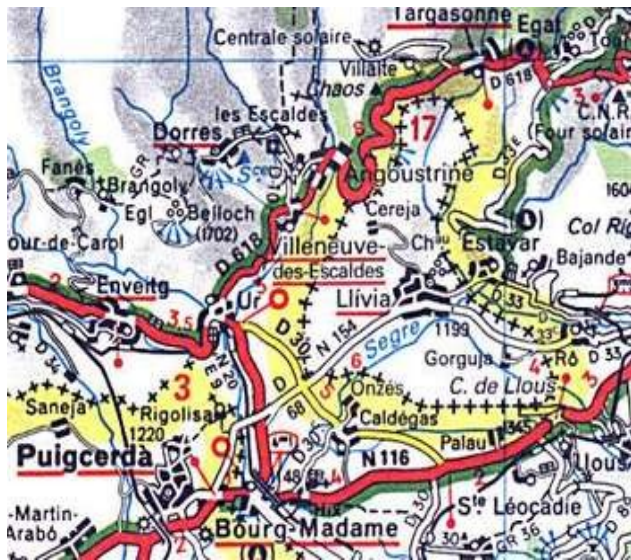


Last week I preached a sermon called Only One Way. There we were reminded that believing in Jesus wasn't just a case of believing in the facts but making life decisions based on the promises of God and trusting Jesus that He will do as He says. It's one thing to believe, it's another to place your trust – but that is the risk of faith. Because we can read the promises but they don't become a reality in our lives until we have trusted – until we decide to follow Jesus.

And it's only when we are prepared to trust, do we find that God is as good as His word and things happened. Many people find this simple step of faith difficult to comprehend, but entering into what God is inviting you to is as simple as: following a road map.

A few years ago we visited the French Pyrenees. It's rather like visiting the Alps but of course, you get an interesting Mediterranean flavour too. I noticed something strange on my road map near to where we were staying. It was a piece of Spain that was totally surrounded by France. It's called the enclave of Llivia, a product of past treaties that no longer make much sense. As we were in the area, we thought it might be an interesting place to visit. The only problem was that I couldn't find it! On the main road there were no signs in France for Llivia. I drove to what I thought was the right place, but where was Llivia? By chance I looked up at a bridge over the main road and there was traffic – lots of cars and lorries on it – all looking as if they had come from the main Spanish-French Border. There was a small slip-road up on to it – but no signposts to say where the road was going. The map suggested Llivia and as I turned on to the

busy road, we joined a whole line of Spanish traffic on what was still marked as a French road. All the road signs showed directions to French villages and towns, but the destination of the main road remained unmarked.



Finally a sign appeared which said “Welcome to Llívia” (in Spanish of course). The road surface changed (to a better one!), Spanish signposts to Llívia appeared. The border had been crossed and we had changed from France to Spain. The architecture of the buildings changed from French to Spanish and we pulled into a very typical Spanish town – completely surrounded by French territory, but with no reference to it at all in France – how bizarre!

We come into the good of what it is to be a Christian, only when we start to trust God and decide to follow Jesus. And it's when we find the way and cross the border, that we come into the fullness of what it means to follow Jesus, because we are given someone: And you also became God's people when you heard the true message, the Good News that brought you salvation. You believed in Christ, and God put his stamp of ownership on you by giving you the Holy Spirit he had

promised. *14 The Spirit is the guarantee that we shall receive what God has promised his people, and this assures us that God will give complete freedom to those who are his. Let us praise his glory!*

If you buy something expensive, what you often have to do is put down a deposit. The deposit is a sign of your goodwill that you are going to take delivery of the product. God has done the same to us if we are believers – He's given us the Holy Spirit as a deposit as a down-payment and guarantee that He is going to deliver on all His promises. Just because we'd crossed the border into Llívia didn't mean that we were in town, but the signs in Spanish gave us that confidence that we will get there. The Holy Spirit is a sign that we have crossed the border and headed for heaven.

So it's the presence of God in our lives that re-assures us that God is as good as His word – we have the down-payment and one day we shall be with Him. And what does the Holy Spirit do in our lives? Quite a few things actually but here's one:

16 I have not stopped giving thanks to God for you. I remember you in my prayers

17 and ask the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, to give you the Spirit, who will make you wise and reveal God to you, so that you will know him.

18 I ask that your minds may be opened to see his light, so that you will know what is the hope to which he has called you, how rich are the wonderful blessings he promises his people,

19 and how very great is his power at work in us who believe. This power working in us is the same as the mighty strength

20 which he used when he raised Christ from death and seated him at his right side in the heavenly world.

The Spirit opens up our minds to the things of God and to the promises of the hope and blessing God has ready for us. I'm going to explore this a bit more this evening but for now want us to dwell on the fact that God has given us is Spirit if we are believers. Wow! We are talking about the Third Person of the Trinity – God, the Holy Spirit – and if you're a believer this morning that's you? That's amazing. That's a privilege.

But so many Christians walk distant from God We are over the border but not living with the benefits of going towards town.

Maybe you are feeling a bit disheartened, or depressed or just de-motivated and fed up about your faith this morning. Then as we come around the table we know that we are coming to a place that Jesus has arranged for us. A place of meeting together and meeting with Him. By His Spirit, we can know His presence and refreshing as we remember again His death on the cross for us that opened that way by

which we enter into God's promises.

As we wait on God this morning, let's ask Him to reveal Himself anew in our church and in our lives – opening up the word of God and the things of God and the way of life in a new and fresh way to us. That's one of the main things the Spirit does for us – to bring us closer to Jesus – let's pray this morning that He will.

Communion

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