

Moses was born into difficult times. The journey of the Hebrew people had taken them to Egypt, where they ended up as slaves of the Pharaoh. Yet the Egyptians were still afraid of them, so it was decreed that all baby boys should be thrown into the Nile.

Moses' parents were not going to let this happen to their precious son! The story tells how his mother and his sister collaborated to save him, with a completely unexpected, God-directed intervention from the Pharaoh's own daughter. Maybe, in their suffering, the Israelites had begun to lose hope in God, but they had not lost their love for each other or their passion for life. So God honoured that love in ways they could never have dreamed of.

For Mary, difficult times lay both behind and ahead. She was recovering from giving birth to her first child, in the muck of a stable. She would, one day, hold in her arms the body of that child after his death on the cross. Simeon's words foreshadowed that agony. Yet Luke's Gospel also hints at joy, in the little picture of the child as he 'grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him'. Imagine God's gift of life, made real in a ten-year-old Jesus.

We too find ourselves in difficult times. The very sudden and dramatic changes brought about by Coronavirus may have taken us by surprise. The future seems less clear than it did, and we don't know what the next few months will hold. And families who might have expected to celebrate Mothering Sunday in style now find themselves isolated at home, maybe worrying about relatives far away.

In these uncertain days, the stories of God's people help us find ways through. The story of Moses tells of a family's commitment to a child's well-being in ways that are imaginative and loving. I'm seeing the same sort of creative commitment in people's responses to others' need, within families and beyond. As I write, I'm watching the Chancellor talking about 'small acts of kindness', and reading a blog about 'caremongering' – a new term from Canada which is all about solidarity and mutual help turned into concrete action, people doing little things to make a difference. Who are the caremongers in the story of Moses? Who are the caremongers in our lives? Where can we be caremongers?

And the story of Mary, Joseph and Jesus in the temple tells us that love can hurt more than anything else, but it's still worth it. The piercing sword of loss was waiting for Mary, but she didn't turn and run from the future. She had said 'yes' to the angel who asked her if she would bear the son of God, and she didn't falter. Sometimes in hard times, we just want to hide under the duvet and pretend it isn't happening. I daresay Mary had her duvet days too sometimes, but she kept going, day by day, year by year, wondering where life would take her son as she watched him grow in wisdom and the favour of God.

So for us too, love and concern go hand-in-hand, now and always. This Mothering Sunday, we are perhaps more aware of this than usual. Like Mary, though, we should continue to hold fast to the reality of our love for other people. Even if at times like this it seems to bring more anxiety than joy, it's still worth holding on to because through it, we share in the love God has for us – which is with us through these difficult times, and will still be there for us, this year, next year, every year.