PREACHING & TEACHING

Mother's Day Sermon Outline

Three different Mother's Day outlines to print and fill: one on Hannah, one on the women who mothered other people's children, and one on God as mother. Plus a pastoral checklist for the service around the sermon, which is where most of the harm on this Sunday is actually done.

3 outlines · 4 segments

Three outlines and a service checklist. The full eighteen-minute version of outline one is on the Mother's Day sermon page.

BEFORE YOU RECORD

- Pick the outline that fits your congregation this year rather than the one that fits every year. A church that has had three bereavements needs outline two, not outline one.
- The service checklist matters more than the sermon choice. Most Mother's Day damage happens in the flowers, the children's slot and the prayers, not in the address.
- Whichever outline you take, open with the acknowledgement. It is the one element that should never be cut for time.

01. Outline one: Hannah

18 min

[for a congregation with visible infertility grief]

1 Samuel 1. Acknowledgement / Hannah in the temple, misread as drunk / the prayer that is not answered for years / what she does with the answer when it comes / honour, without a standard / close.

Claim: the Bible's most famous mother spends most of her story not being one.

02. Outline two: the ones who mothered

18 min

[for a congregation with many who are not mothers]

Exodus 2 and Ruth 4:16. Acknowledgement / Moses has three mothers in the first ten verses, and two of them did not bear him / Naomi takes Obed to her breast / mothering as an act performed, not a status held / who has mothered you / close.

Claim: almost nobody in scripture is mothered by exactly one person.

03. Outline three: the maternal God

18 min

[the most theologically interesting and the one to preach carefully]

Isaiah 66:13, Isaiah 49:15, Hosea 11:3-4, Matthew 23:37. Acknowledgement / four maternal images of God read together / why most of us have never heard a sermon on them / what it changes / close.

Claim: these images are in the text, in plain sight, and the fact that they feel novel says more about our preaching than about scripture.

04. The service checklist

before Sunday

[this list prevents more harm than any sermon choice]

Flowers to everyone or to nobody, never to mothers only. No standing up if you are a mother. Prayers that name the people for whom today is hard, out loud, not by implication.

Warn the children's leader in advance if a child in the group has lost a mother this year, and give that child something else to make. Tell people the week before that the service will mark the day gently, so anyone who needs to skip it can decide in their own time rather than at the door.

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