

“A TRULY GOOD ... MOTHER”
by Rom A. Pegram (5/14/17)

The very last chapter of the book of Proverbs gives us a description of a ‘good woman.’ Today, I want to use this description to talk about what it means to be a ‘truly good ... mother.’ Listen to our scripture lesson for today (Proverbs 31:10-31, MSG)...

“A good woman [mother] is hard to find, and worth far more than diamonds. ¹¹ Her husband trusts her without reserve, and never has reason to regret it. ¹² Never spiteful, she treats him generously all her life long. ¹³ She shops around for the best yarns and cottons, and enjoys knitting and sewing. ¹⁴ She's like a trading ship that sails to faraway places and brings back exotic surprises. ¹⁵ She's up before dawn, preparing breakfast for her family and organizing her day. ¹⁶ She looks over a field and buys it, then, with money she's put aside, plants a garden. ¹⁷ First thing in the morning, she dresses for work, rolls up her sleeves, eager to get started. ¹⁸ She senses the worth of her work, is in no hurry to call it quits for the day. ¹⁹ She's skilled in the crafts of home and hearth, diligent in homemaking. ²⁰ She's quick to assist anyone in need, reaches out to help the poor. ²¹ She doesn't worry about her family when it snows; their winter clothes are all mended and ready to wear. ²² She makes her own clothing, and dresses in colorful linens and silks. ²³ Her husband is greatly respected when he deliberates with the city fathers. ²⁴ She designs gowns and sells them, brings the sweaters she knits to the dress shops. ²⁵ Her clothes are well-made and elegant, and she always faces tomorrow with a smile. ²⁶ When she speaks she has something worthwhile to say, and she always says it kindly. ²⁷ She keeps an eye on everyone in her household, and keeps them all busy and productive. ²⁸ Her children respect and bless her; her husband joins in with words of praise: ²⁹ ‘Many women have done wonderful things, but you've outclassed them all!’ ³⁰ Charm can mislead and beauty soon fades. The woman to be admired and praised is the woman who lives in the Fear-of-GOD. ³¹ Give her everything she deserves! Festoon her life with praises!”

I'm thankful today for our ‘truly good ... mothers.’ And many of us have been blessed with a good mother indeed! And using this final section of Proverbs that describes the ‘ideal,’ I believe we can all see some of *our own mothers* in this ancient hymn/Hebrew poem...

I often stress, especially in worship, that we come into this place with thankful hearts—*attitudes of gratitude*—and this worship service is no different. Our specific focus today is moms ... and so that's what I come here most thankful for on this day. And I encourage you to join me in that as we explore the writer of Proverbs description of a ‘truly good mother.’ So let me say ... *we are thankful for and we celebrate today...*

MOTHERS WITH STRONG CHARACTER. Again, verses 11-12 tell us, “Her husband trusts her without reserve, and never has reason to regret it. ¹² Never spiteful, she treats him generously all her life long.” Does this describe your own mother ... or the mother of your children? For me it does—both equally...

In my profession, people often talk about someone being ‘the strength behind the...’ pastor... That, folks, was my mother. And my father would be the first to admit it. He was a very successful pastor—all of his life, but he would be the first to tell you ... *my mother was his earthly strength*. She was the strength behind the pastor. And, folks, this scripture talks about ‘TRUST’. You can’t work with those you don’t trust ... or who don’t trust you. There is no business that we’re about in this world that really works without TRUST being in place. As this scripture says, he ‘trusted her without reserve.’ Folks, she was such a vital part of his ministry that when he retired, people were saying almost as much about my mother as they did my father—things like: “Over the years, she did as much counseling at home ... as my father did in his office!” She was ‘generous’ like that—always seeking to be an asset to the ministry, as opposed to a liability...

And I could say the same about ‘the mother of my children, too’ today. Folks, there is nothing like a mother with *a strong character*. Every child (including husbands) needs one... *Secondly, we are thankful for and celebrate...*

MOTHERS WITH MANY SKILLS. Verses 13-19 remind us: “She shops around for the best yarns and cottons, and enjoys knitting and sewing. ¹⁴ She's like a trading ship that sails to faraway places and brings back exotic surprises. ¹⁵ She's up before dawn, preparing breakfast for her family and organizing her day. ¹⁶ She looks over a field and buys it, then, with money she's put aside, plants a garden. ¹⁷ First thing in the morning, she dresses for work, rolls up her sleeves, eager to get started. ¹⁸ She senses the worth of her work, is in no hurry to call it quits for the day. ¹⁹ She's skilled in the crafts of home and hearth, diligent in homemaking.”

Now, again, this is *an ideal* that we’re talking about here ... and very contextual to thousands of years ago. There is no one alive on the face of the earth that could accomplish everything that’s on this list; *it’s an ideal*—a description of many women/mothers and what they can accomplish! And *it’s very contextual* in this sense: DON’T EXPECT YOUR MOTHER ... OR THE MOTHER OF YOUR CHILDREN ... TO BE LIKE ‘A TRADING SHIP’, sailing away to faraway places and bringing you back ‘exotic surprises’ every single day! I told you ... it was an ideal, didn’t I?

But, motherhood does involve skill, doesn’t it? And I truly believe God prepares each generation of moms with the set of skills they need for the particular day they live in. For my mom, her skills came through in the kitchen. That was her laboratory, her classroom and her office. That’s where she could do anything she set her mind to! *It was in the kitchen...*

- She cooked some of the most wonderful dinners—to nourish her young ones—that a kid could ever dream of ... and she made homemade desserts that I’m not sure were nutritious, but they sure were good ... and the memories still linger today!
- That she became a teacher ... teaching her kids not only how to cook and bake ... but how to take responsibility, how to work hard, how to converse with adults, and—generally speaking—how to live our lives!

- That Mom became the counselor; there was as many people dropping by our house to talk to Mom ... as there were those who were popping by my dad's office to talk to the pastor...

We should be thankful ... and we should celebrate all the skills it takes to be a mom today, too—a different set of skills today, for sure. Folks, aren't you thankful for mothers with skills today? It takes a lot to be a mother ... and we should celebrate these exceptional persons in our lives today! Next, the writer of Proverbs tells us about...

MOTHERS WITH GREAT COMPASSION. Verse 20 says, "She's quick to assist anyone in need, reaches out to help the poor." This could also describe my own mother ... or the mother of my children. Now, understand that Verse 20 could be describing those who are physically poor ... or it could be describing those who are 'poor in spirit'—in other words, 'having a down day' ... and isn't that when moms really shine?

As most of you know, when you're a kid, there're certain things you talk to your dad about ... and there were certain things you talk to your mom about. Any time myself or my siblings were going through a 'down day', guess who we'd turn to? 'Not Dad! He was a bit more analytical, very much a 'fix it' kind of guy ... and sometimes you just needed someone to listen *with compassion*. That was Mom at our house. V. 20 again says, "She's quick to assist anyone in need, reaches out to help the poor." Many times, it was the 'poor in spirit'—those of us who were going through a 'down day' and Mom was always there. (When my kids—even as adults—have a bad day, guess who they want to talk to? If you guessed *mom*, you are absolutely correct...) She's a mother with great compassion ... and there's no substitute for that! We need to be thankful for and celebrate those moms today! Finally, we need to be thankful for and celebrate...

MOTHERS WITH GREAT WISDOM. Verse 26 tells us, "When she speaks she has something worthwhile to say [wisdom], and she always says it kindly." I don't know about you, but I grew up with the impression that my mother knew everything! She was full of wisdom! There was nothing I could get away with, because my Mom knew it all!

Once there was a mom who was out walking with her 4-year-old daughter when her girl picked up something from the ground and started to put it in her mouth. The mother tells us what happened in her own words:

"I took the item away from her and I asked her not to do that." My daughter quickly asked, "Why?" "Because it's been lying outside, you don't know where it's been, it's dirty and probably has germs," I replied.

At this point, my daughter looked at me with total admiration and asked, "Wow! How do you know all this stuff?"

I thought quickly and said, "All moms know this stuff. It's on the Mommy Test. You have to know it, or they don't let you be a Mommy."

We walked along in silence for 2 or 3 minutes, as she pondered this new information. "Oh...I get it!" she beamed, "So if you don't pass the test you have to be the daddy?"

I smiled and replied, "Exactly."

Mothers with great wisdom—*nothing like them!* And, finally, we come to the end of Proverbs... Vv. 30-31 – “Charm can mislead and beauty soon fades. The woman to be admired and praised is the woman who lives in the Fear-of-GOD. ³¹ **Give her everything she deserves!** Festoon [cover/decorate] her life with praises!” Is this how we’re treating our mothers today? It should be! Let me end today with an old story about a mother’s journey...

There was a young mother who set her foot on the path of life. "Is this the long way?" she asked. And the guide said: "Yes, and the way is hard. And you will be old before you reach the end of it. But the end will be better than the beginning." But the young mother was happy, and she would not believe that anything could be better than these years. So she played with her children, and gathered flowers for them along the way, and bathed them in the clear streams. And the sun shone on them, and the young mother cried, "Nothing will ever be lovelier than this."

Then the night came, and the storm, and the path was dark, and the children shook with fear and cold, and the mother drew them close and covered them with her mantle, and the children said, "Mother, we are not afraid, for you are near, and no harm can come."

And the morning came, and there was a hill ahead, and the children climbed and grew weary, and the mother was weary. But at all times she said to the children, "A little patience and we are there." So the children climbed, and when they reached the top, they said, "Mother, we would not have done it without you."

And the mother, when she lay down at night looked up at the stars and said, "This is a better day than the last, for my children have learned fortitude in the face of hardness. Yesterday I gave them courage. Today, I have given them strength."

And with the next day came strange clouds which darkened the earth, clouds of war and hate and evil, and the children groped and stumbled, and the mother said: "Look up. Lift your eyes to the light." And the children looked and saw above the clouds an everlasting glory, and it guided them beyond the darkness. And that night the mother said, "This is the best day of all, for I have shown my children God."

And the days went on, and the weeks and the months and the years, and the mother grew old and she was little and bent. But her children were tall and strong, and walked with courage. And when the way was rough, they lifted her, for she was as light as a feather; and at last they came to a hill, and beyond they could see a shining road and golden gates flung wide. And the mother said: "I have reached the end of my journey. And now I know the end is better than the beginning, for my children can walk alone, and their children after them."

And the children said, "You will always walk with us, Mother, even when you have gone through the gates." And they stood and watched her as she went on alone, and the gates closed after her. And they said: "We cannot see her, but she is with us still. A mother like ours is more than a memory. She is a living presence."

Folks, your mother is always with you. She’s the whisper of the leaves as you walk down the street, she’s the smell of bleach in your freshly laundered socks, and she’s the

cool hand on your brow when you're not well. ... Your mother lives inside your laughter. And she's crystallized in every tear drop. She's the place you came from, your first home; and she's the map you follow with every step you take. She's your first love and your first heartbreak, and nothing on earth can separate you—not time, not space...not even death!

The gift of motherhood is what I'm most thankful for today. Take just a moment, would you ... and think about your own mom ... and the mother of your children. Won't you join me in thanking God ... for the gift of moms today?