

## **A Mother's Love**

*preached by Rev. Paul Sakasov on May 13, 2018*

Today's Scripture comes from Proverbs 31:10-31. We will be reading select verses from this passage that have been chosen and slightly modified for Mother's Day. In the original reading the subject of the text is a wife of noble character. However, for today, I have taken the word, "wife," and replaced it with, "mother."

### Proverbs 31:10-31

10 A mother of noble character is worth far more than rubies. 14 She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar. 15 She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls. 17 She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks. 20 She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy. 21 When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet. 25 She is clothed with strength and dignity. 26 She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. 27 She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. 28 Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: A mother who fears the LORD is to be praised. 31 Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

In our Scripture reading this morning, we are given a glimpse into the most noble life of all, the life of a mother. Using the illustration of a hard working mother from long ago, this reading reminds us how important mothers are to establishing a healthy family, community, and society.

This status that mothers have, and the impact that mothers make all flow from a heart that has learned to look beyond themselves and to nurture life. This heart is nicely summarized in the following poem about motherhood.

"Before I was a Mom I slept as late as I wanted and never worried about how late I got into bed. I brushed my hair and my teeth everyday. Before I was a Mom - I cleaned my house each day. Before I was a Mom I never tripped over toys or forgot words to a lullaby. I didn't worry whether or not my plants were poisonous. I never thought about immunizations. Before I was a Mom - I had never been puked on, pooped on, chewed on or wet on. I had complete control of my mind and my thoughts. I slept all night. Before I was a Mom I never held down a screaming child so doctors could do tests. Or give shots. I never looked into teary eyes and cried. I never got gloriously happy over a simple grin. I never sat up late hours at night watching a baby sleep. Before I was a Mom I never held a sleeping baby just because I didn't want to put them down. I never felt my heart break into

a million pieces when I couldn't stop the hurt. I never knew that something so small could affect my life so much. I never knew that I could love someone so much. I never knew I would love being a Mom. Before I was a Mom - I didn't know the feeling of having my heart outside my body. I didn't know how special it could feel to feed a hungry baby. I didn't know that bond between a mother and her child. I didn't know that something so small could make me feel so important and happy. Before I was a Mom - I had never gotten up in the middle of the night every ten minutes to make sure all was okay. I had never known the warmth, the joy, the love, the heartache, the wonderment or the satisfaction of being a Mom. I didn't know I was capable of feeling so much, before I was a Mom."

This is the heart of a mother who tirelessly gives of herself to nurture life. Not surprisingly, this is also the heart of God who has taught our mothers to love us, just the way He does.

As a result, our mothers love us with an unconditional love. This love is manifested by the fact that no matter what we have done to our mothers in life; if we have pooped on them or puked on them as babies, if we have broken their favorite china as toddlers, or ran them ragged as youngsters, or made their hair turn grey and given them ulcers as teenagers; if we have disappointed them with our life choices as adults, or even if we have become a child "that only a mother could love;" no matter what we have done, or how mad we have made them, or how deeply we have broken their hearts, our mothers somehow have always seemed to love us. No doubt this is the reason that so many bikers and prisoners have a tattoo that says, "Mom."

In a similar manner, the Bible tells us that God is also tenderhearted towards His children. God loves us with a motherly love. Even when we make Him angry with lifestyle choices that we know are wrong. Even when we break His heart by rejecting His love. Even when we live our lives as if there is no God in heaven who made us, and to whom we belong. Even when our hearts are cold in worship. In all these circumstances, God still loves us with an amazing unconditional love. Like the father in the parable of "The Prodigal Son," God never stops loving us. God never gives up on us. God is always looking to welcome us home. God longs to embrace us in his arms. As the saying goes, "there is nothing we can do to make God love us more and nothing we can do to make God love us less." That is unconditional love.

Closely related to this unconditional love is sacrificial love. This form of self giving love is exemplified by our mothers who have given so much of themselves

for us. To illustrate this point, I'm sure each one of us here can think of the ways our mothers have given of themselves on our behalf. I'm sure that every mother here today is well aware of the ways they have given of themselves on behalf of their children.

In the same way, God's love for us is not only unconditional, but it is sacrificial. As Scripture tells us, in the beginning, all creation fell under the deadly curse of sin. This disease could only be cured by God's own blood, which is why Jesus, the Son of God, entered into this world and died on a cross. Through this act of sacrificial love, healing and hope came into the world. And through this act of sacrificial love the pathway to God was restored.

That being said, getting us on the right pathway is not always an easy thing to do. Sometimes it requires a little bit of tough love. While this is a hard kind of love to administer, our mothers have always been there to administer it to us, just as God has taught them.

This means they have forced us to share when we were young, when we would rather have kept our toys to ourselves. Sometimes it meant forcing us to go outside to play when we would have rather have stayed inside. Tough love for us has also meant making sure we ate properly and went to bed at a reasonable time. Tough love has meant making sure we cleaned our rooms and did our homework. Tough love has meant helping us chose our friends, picking the social activities we were allowed to attend, setting standards for how we would dress, and what TV shows we could watch.

While we may not have appreciated this kind of love that our mothers demonstrated when we were in our youth, as time has passed, and as we have grown in wisdom, we have come to appreciate this crucial form of love our mothers administered. As time has passed we have also grown in our gratitude and respect for our mothers for having the strength to do what needed to be done.

This growth in gratitude and respect, also accompanies us as we mature in our Christian faith. For in the same manner that our mothers have watched over us, God also has watched over us and He actively works in our lives steering us away from trouble in order that we may walk on the straight and narrow path. As Jesus said, "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline."

Again, the reason God disciplines us, and the reason He offers us unconditional and sacrificial love is so that we may learn to love in a similar way, and through

the giving and receiving of love, we may find the fullness of life.

As I think of how this works in daily life, I am reminded of a silent film we were shown back when I was in public school. In this film, a young boy is playing baseball and he is deeply frustrated because his glove is badly worn out and it is affecting his ability to play. In the background, his mother notices her boy's frustration and she comes up with a plan to help him out.

The story continues as the mother and son set up a lemonade stand outside their home. Then, slowly but surely, the money from the lemonade sales starts to accumulate and eventually there is enough money for the boy to buy a new ball glove.

So, the mother and son happily walk down town to the sports store in order to make their anticipated purchase. However, before they reach the sports store, they pass by a clothing store. And in the front window of that store there is a lovely dress that the little boy has noticed his mother stopping to admire on many occasions. As they walk by this store, the young boy feels a tug on his heart as he becomes aware of an opportunity to show his love and appreciation for his mother. After a moments hesitation he walks into the clothing store and takes the money he was going to use to buy a ball glove and he spends it on the new dress for his mother. The final scene of the movie is the young boy back out on the ball field, perfectly content and making due, with his old ball glove.

This is the whole point of love; as it comes to us from God and as we receive it from our mothers. For God has ordained love to produce love and from the shared love between God and His people, or children and their mothers life is lived to its fullest.

So with this thought in mind, may love complete its chartered course. And may love guide us as we celebrate our mothers on this special day. Through the love that we have been taught, may we honour our mothers for the unconditional, sacrificial and tough love they have shown us throughout the days of our lives. May we praise them, like the mother we read about today in Proverbs thirty one, for their value is greater than rubies, and their praise is well earned. Finally, as we honour our mothers on Mother's Day, let us remember to thank God for mothers and for the good we have received through them, and for the revelation of the character of God we have experienced by their touch.