

Announcements:

1. End of year BBQ
2. Men's Retreat
3. Operation Christmas Child
4. Help needed at Lone Tree Ranch
5. Mother's Day Lunch after service
6. 4 Questions:
 1. Who has been a mother the longest?
 2. Who has raised the most children?
 3. Who has the most boys?
 4. Who has a kid in the farthest corner of the earth?

A Mother's Day Sermon: To be greatly praised Proverbs 31:30-31

Mother's Day became a national holiday in 1914 by President Woodrow Wilson. The origin of it in the United States is said to come mainly from a woman named Anna Jarvis who before the Civil War started clubs to help teach mothers how to care for children. After the Civil War, these clubs became a unifying force in parts of the country that were still ravished with division.

In 1905, Anna Jarvis passed away. Her daughter, also named Anna, conceived of the idea of a Mother's day as a way of honoring the sacrifices mothers make for their children. Together, in May of 1908, together with the financial backing of a store owner in Philadelphia, they organized the first official Mother's day celebration at a Methodist Church in West Virginia and at his store.

Anna fought for the recognition of this day to become a national holiday. By 1912, many across America were celebrating the day. In 1914, her dream had come true and President Wilson had taken notice and signed a bill making it a national holiday.

However, the interesting thing is, Anna in just a few years began to fight against this holiday because of the commercialism that sprung up. Florists, card companies, and many other merchants saw the opportunity to capitalize on the holiday and they did. She would use every last cent of

hers, up to her death, to file lawsuits against the commercialism that she believed took away from Mother's Day.

Mothers are a very important group to celebrate. It can become easy for Mother's day to become another holiday of celebrating something of great importance and then, waking up the next morning and moving on.

Motherhood is an important and valuable asset to the future of this country, and really our world. Mothers are care-givers, nurturers, spiritual guides, wisdom givers, teachers, a place of safety, friends, love, and so much more. This is not to take away from the role of a father, but only adds to it. When a mother and father come together to raise up a child in a unifying, loving, future-minded manner, that child stands a chance. Our country stands a chance. Our world stands a chance.

Today we celebrate Mother's. Mother's day is a day filled with all kinds of emotion. For many it is filled with good emotion. But, for some, it can be a day of raw, hard emotion. The raw emotion could be from the loss of a mother. It could be from a woman who has looked forward to being a mom since childhood and that dream is physically unable to come true. There could be raw emotion from the loss of a child. For those of you that are struggling this Mother's day, we want to acknowledge your heartache. May the Lord give you extra grace today. We don't want to take away from what you feel. We don't want to overlook you as we celebrate this day.

Today, we are going to take a short look at a what makes a women fit to be the best she can be. It takes effort on her part, but also takes effort on our part as husbands, as children.

[Read Proverbs 31:30-31].

I will be honest, I don't like to preach from Proverbs 31. When King Lemuel who is said to have written this poem, when you read through it, it almost sounds impossible to attain all that Proverbs 31:10-31 mentions. Proverbs 31 sounds impossible to attain. But, if you really stop and think about it, a wife, a mother naturally does most of this.

I have titled this sermon, "A Mother's Day Sermon: to be greatly praised." A mother is to be great praised. And where her praise is greatest, is when

she fears the Lord. When she fears the Lord, she will reap the blessing of motherhood in a deeper and greater way. Every mother who pours time and energy into their child will reap the benefit of loving their child. But, I will stand boldly and say that a mother that fears the Lord gains a greater and deeper blessing that one cannot know until you are there.

I want to look at two things today:

- 1) What does it mean to 'fear the Lord',
- 2) The result: she will be greatly praised.

Proverbs 31 is a poem. Poems of this type when written to or about a loved one are often an exaggeration to get the point across, but have a lot of truth within. King Lemuel writes in such a manner.

The Hebrew alphabet is 22 characters long. This poem is an acrostic of the Hebrew alphabet. Each one of the verses, verses 10-31 in Proverbs 31, starts with a character of the Hebrew alphabet.

Let's look at the first of our two phrases this morning. It's the most important of the two phrases. "To fear the Lord."

Fear is a tricky thing. Often times we think of fear as something that makes you cower, stop you in your tracks, keep you up late worrying, it takes away your focus upon things that matter...some fears just absolutely paralyze your ability to be effective, efficient, and successful, some fears makes us hide altogether. Some fears cause us to run the other direction.

Fear of the Lord for some will cause these reactions. But, it is an unhealthy and wrongly known fear of the Lord. I once heard the fear of the Lord likened to a dog. The analogy is a little lacking, but it does get the point across.

Often times I will bring my dog to work with me. Pako and I are buddies. He loves to go for rides with me. In the morning, lately, in the late, late morning, when I get ready to come to the church to work, I say, "Pako, ready to go for rides...want to go for a ride." He picks his head up, looks at me, pauses...and then puts his head back down and closes his eyes. But, as soon as I get near the door and he hears me pull out the box that his leash is in, he gets up, meets me at the door with a smiling face and wagging tale.

When we get to work, he comes in the building with me and has to go and check out every room that has an open door. I go and sit at my desk, he sniffs the bag of treats in my office. I give in every time and give him one, but then he lays down just outside my door.

Some of you, when you come and he is here, when you come into the building you are met by this dog that comes running at you barking. And you have learned that Pako isn't going to bite you. As a matter of fact, for many of you, he is excited to see you. When you greet him, his tale is wagging and welcoming. But, you also know, that he is a dog and has protective side. He is a loving dog. And he is. However, if you were to harm one of his people, especially his girls, he'll go after you.

The simple analogy is this: when you know God and He knows you, you are welcomed, love, and protected. You also know, that there are lines you don't cross. There are lines that deserve judgment, so there is a healthy fear. But, you don't really worry about those lines, so you have freedom, because you aren't doing anything worthy of being bitten or judged.

However, when you begin to move towards those lines you shouldn't cross, there is a discipline that happens. There is a snap or a nipping at you to warn you to do something different, to back up away from trouble. Love gives a warning. Love disciplines. Love actually works to keep you within the healthy boundaries for your good.

But, if you don't know Pako and Pako doesn't know you, he is on guard and so are you. You don't know him. You will be uncomfortable with him. You won't feel freedom, you will feel judgment, a constant watching and you will feel you have to be on constant watch. You will feel as though you have to sneak around, keep distance, and always keep lookout and find ways to get around without getting caught...or maybe you do get caught so you find a way to lie or manipulate to get out of the situation. You won't feel the freedom love brings. You won't feel protected by the love God brings, instead you will feel condemned by the love that helps you to flourish because at times it will bring discipline, it will have boundaries that don't always feel good...but are good for you.

The book of Proverbs starts out talking about the fear of the Lord. Proverbs is part of what is called the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament. Proverbs is a conglomeration of wise sayings; many were written by Solomon, King David's son, and some of them were written by others. The proverb we are looking at today is written by King Lemuel.

King Lemuel ties up this book with mentioning the fear of the Lord and Solomon starts the book by speaking of the fear of Lord. Proverbs 1:7 says, "Fear of the Lord is the foundation of true knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline." Proverbs 9:10 says the "Fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment."

What can we take from those two verses? The fear of the Lord leads to right knowledge and wisdom, and results in good judgment. The woman of Proverbs 31 is a woman of good judgment. Good judgment comes from knowing God.

There are two ideas of knowing God in scripture. There is knowing God as the demons know God and there is the knowing God that those with love for God know God. The demons know of God, they know about God, they know there is a God according to James 2:19. They fear the day of their judgment, and until that day, they will do as they can to thwart God's plan and hurt God's people, and to blind the minds and eyes of those who don't know God. The second type of knowledge is relationship tied with experience. It is pouring yourself into knowing God and experiencing His presence in your life. The knowledge of God turns to wisdom as we "live in a way that pleases Him, and love Him and serve Him with all your heart and soul" according to Deuteronomy 10:12.

Proverbs 14:26-27 says, "Those who fear the Lord are secure; he will be a refuge for their children. Fear of the Lord is a life-giving fountain; it offers escape from the snares of death." Likewise, Proverbs 19:23 says fearing the Lord brings "security and protection from harm". The woman of Proverbs 31 does just that for her family: she secures clothing, takes care to provide food, knows the coming and goings of the household, she keeps the house in order so that it is prepared for the different seasons of life, and she finds ways to supplement income.

Proverbs 8:13 says, “To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech.” One who fears the Lord loves what God loves, and hates what God hates. So, one who fears the Lord vigilantly gets rid of the things in their thoughts that lead to sin. Because, what fills your thoughts, what we dwell on, what we choose to believe, is what comes out of our mouths and shows up in our actions. The Proverbs 31 woman is a woman of humility, prudence, honor, gets things done, and doesn’t get caught up with the things that idleness brings such as gossip and all the knowings of everyone else. Instead, she is consumed with her family and then the care of the needy. As Proverbs 31:26 points out, her words are filled with wisdom and knowledge filled with kindness that breeds discernment.

Proverbs 28:14 says, “Blessed are those who fear to do wrong, but the stubborn are headed for serious trouble.” When the heart becomes stubborn and begins to harden it has an overflow. We are affected, but the overflow is often those we love. Listen to a proverb a few verses before, “When the godly succeed, everyone is glad. When the wicked take charge, people go into hiding.” I have seen this in families. There is nothing more strenuous on a child, more unsettling, more disrupting, than when a parent has hardened their heart. The parents suffer, the kids are destroyed. Proverbs 29:2 says it this way, “When the godly are in authority, the people rejoice. But when the wicked are in power, they groan.” No parent wants their kids to have to live under the baggage we bring them. Humility can save the day. Godly humility can break chains. A parent that seeks God and fears the Lord, admits wrong, teaches from their wrong, chooses what is right in God’s eyes will bring a new and good path for the family to go down. It may take time, and often does. But, “when the godly succeed, everyone is glad.”

The woman of Proverbs 31 that fears the Lord is a woman that gives the opportunity for success and she breeds honor and respect as well as rest and security for her family. Why? Because they don’t worry, they are able to freely go and do what it is they are to do knowing that the foundation of the home is taken care of.

And this brings us to the second phrase, she is “to be greatly praised.” Proverbs 31:28 and 29 says, “Her children stand and bless her. Her husband praises her: “There are many virtuous and capable women in the

world, but you surpass them all!” Verse 31 says, “Reward her for all she has done. Let her deeds publicly declare her praise.”

There are a few different angles I want to come from here. First, her children give her the honor she is due. This is found as a command by God all throughout scripture. And, it is a command that has a reward to the child for doing it. You children in here (so really all of us) should be looking for ways to honor her not just in public, but at home also. It will go good for you.

Second, husbands, love your wife. Honor her. Look only to her. There may be many women in the world that are virtuous and capable, they may have charm and beauty, but she is yours. You look only to her. Create an environment for her to flourish. Create an environment for her to have success. Create an environment for her to be esteemed and listened to. Create an environment she will grow under. Be a God-fearing, God-loving, God-centered man that reveals God and let's her experience God's love through you. You are her greatest security apart from God. Love her as God loves her. Now...ladies, you have a responsibility to respond when he does this. Trust it. Trust what God says about this. In the long-term you will be happier and have greater emotional rest. Men, when you do what I just said, you won't want to look to other women, because you will yearn for her charm and bask in her beauty.

Men, speak of her great qualities. Pay attention and recognize what great things she does. As you speak of her great qualities, as you pay attention to them, as you make those known, as you respond to them, it will cause others to fall in line. It will publicly declare her praise. Women want to be noticed. As you notice her, she will feel reward. As she is being 'built up' it will encourage her.