

**“Marvelous Mom!”**  
**Proverbs 31:1-9**  
May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019

**Things Mom Would Never Say:**

- \* “Let me smell that shirt—Yeah, it’s good for another week.”
- \* “You can keep that stray dog, honey. I’ll be glad to feed and walk him every day.”
- \* “I don’t have a tissue with me...just go ahead and use your sleeve.”
- \* “Oh, don’t bother wearing a jacket—the wind-chill is bound to improve.”

You won’t find this day we call Mother’s Day mentioned in sacred Scripture. It was a phenomenon created by Anna Jarvis in 1908 and was first recognized as an American holiday in 1914. Long before 1914, however, Moses commanded the people of God to “honor (their) father and mother” (**Ex. 20:12**).

So, in observing Mother’s Day the second Sunday of each May, at least in one way, we fulfill that commandment to honor our moms. Even so, we must be mindful that not everyone is in a celebratory frame of mind on Mother’s Day. Some women:

- \* have never married and are without children;
- \* Some are single mothers;
- \* Some have gone through miscarriage;
- \* Other women are widowed;
- \* Some are infertile, and therefore unable to have children;
- \* had terrible childhoods and may no longer speak to their mothers.

The challenge for a preacher on a day like today is to keep our focus upon Jesus while praising mothers. For sure, I am most thankful for mothers, especially those who are faithful to show their children Jesus – in the home, in the public square, and in ensuring their children are part of the weekly body life and fellowship of God’s Church.

There have likely been hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of sermons preached on Mother’s Day from **Proverbs 31:10-31** (that’s the passage known as “The Virtuous (Excellent) Wife.” *But, have you ever heard a Mother’s Day sermon preached on the first 9 verses of that 31<sup>st</sup> Proverb?* Well, after today, you can say that you have!

**Proverbs 31:1-9:**

“The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him:

- <sup>2</sup>What, my son?  
And what, son of my womb?  
And what, son of my vows?  
<sup>3</sup>Do not give your strength to women,  
Nor your ways to that which destroys kings.  
<sup>4</sup>*It is not for kings, O Lemuel,  
It is not for kings to drink wine,*

Nor for princes intoxicating drink;  
<sup>5</sup> Lest they drink and forget the law,  
 And pervert the justice of all the afflicted.  
<sup>6</sup> Give strong drink to him who is perishing,  
 And wine to those who are bitter of heart.  
<sup>7</sup> Let him drink and forget his poverty,  
 And remember his misery no more.  
<sup>8</sup> Open your mouth for the speechless,  
 In the cause of all *who are* appointed to die.  
<sup>9</sup> Open your mouth, judge righteously,  
 And plead the cause of the poor and needy.”

Fourteen times in the Book of Proverbs, the word “mother” is used (*New King James Version*). You’ll note it is mentioned in the first verse of **Proverb 31**. We’ll come back to that. *But, who’s this guy King Lemuel mentioned right off the bat in verse 1?* His name means, “Belonging to God.” The *Revised Standard Version* refers to him as “Lemuel King of Massa.” Massa was an Arab tribe which dwelt on the borders of Palestine. For sure, Lemuel and his nameless mother are notable in that they are non-Israelites through whom inspired Scripture was mediated.

Back in **Proverb Chapter 1**, we find the first admonition in the Book of Proverbs. This is **Proverb 1:8** – “My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother;” “A specific sampling of that maternal instruction begins the closing chapter of (Proverbs). And sound advice it is.” (Hubbard, 485) This instruction is also emphasized in **Proverb 6:20**, in a context regarding sexual sin. We read there, “My son, keep your father’s command, and do not forsake the law of your mother.”

As we look further at these first 9 verses of **Proverbs 31**, I’d have you note we’re looking for various ways that God’s grace is evident in this passage. **A grace of God present here in this text is the creation of the family.** The first family the Bible mentions is the first people God created, Adam and Eve, our first parents. They came together as husband and wife, and God gave Adam and Eve three sons – Cain, Abel, and Seth.

Though all families have warts (and this first family had severe problems!), the family is composed of parents and children who are a little school and a little church. We learn the most about life in and through the family, who happen to be the people with whom we spend the most time, and, typically, have the best relationships and affection toward one another.

A London editor submitted to Winston Churchill for his approval a list of all those who had been Churchill’s teachers. Churchill returned the list with this comment; “You have omitted to mention the greatest of my teachers – my mother.”

For Christians, we have another bigger, more extensive family in which we have also been placed by God – the Church. We are born physically into our family, and we are born a second time into another family – the local Church. How gracious of God to give us two families!

As seminary president and author Albert Mohler said last week on his podcast, *The Briefing*:

The most common use of the Greek term *ecclesia*, the word translated “church” in the New Testament, is of a gathered community that meets together.

“The biblical understanding of (the Church) is that it is a visible gathered community of persons who have come to know and have confessed together that Jesus Christ is Lord and they are marked by a common obedience to Christ...and they share together in the life of a congregation, a congregation that is not only a gathered community but is actually also a membership. It is actually a people.”

**A second grace evident in these opening verses is that King Lemuel was blessed with a godly mother.** I imagine when you think of your mother, whether she yet lives this side of eternity, or she has gone on to the next life, you remember some of the instruction she gave you. Mom was probably the one who instructed you to always wear clean underwear, and not to take a bath during a thunderstorm. Mom is also probably the one who told you as bad as things can get, they could always be worse. Mom also kept things in perspective by reminding you that tomorrow is a new day.

The Apostle Paul reminded his protégé, Timothy, that it was his mother and grandmother who instructed him in the most important things of life. We read in **2 Timothy 1:5**, “I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.” Timothy’s mother instructed him in the ways of the Lord Jesus Christ; and there’s nothing more important for mothers (and fathers) to teach their children. Newborn babies come into this world at war with God; every baby inherits the sin nature imposed upon every person going back to the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in **Genesis Chapter 3**. We are born dead in our sins; with no spiritual capacity to please God whatsoever. Unless and until God breathes life into our spirits, and changes our hearts from stone to flesh, we remain dead spiritually. To die in that state is to spend eternity in hell.

Godly parents teach their children of their need for a Savior (they’re sinners) and they point to Jesus Christ, God the Son, as the remedy to their sinful situation. (Which, incidentally, is also the charge given to the larger family, the Church).

**A third grace of God evident in these verses is the people had a godly king.** The king’s mother teaches what her son should be concerned as a man who feared the Lord God. Her words are in verses 3-5: “Do not give your strength to women, nor your ways to that which destroys kings. *It is not for kings, O Lemuel, It is not for kings to drink wine, Nor for princes intoxicating drink; lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted.*”

Lemuel’s mother is concerned with women and wine. She teaches of the evil of sexual sin and drunkenness. Both of these sin topics are found in several other Scriptures, both Old and New Testament (for instance, other passages in **Proverbs, Jeremiah Chap 3; Hosea Chap 4; Matthew Chaps 5 & 19; Mark Chap 10; 1 Corinthians Chap 5** for adultery – and **Genesis Chap 9; Deuteronomy Chap 29; 1 Samuel Chap 1; Proverb Chap 20; Isaiah Chap 24; Luke Chap 21; Romans Chap 13; Galatians Chap 5; 1 Peter Chap 4** for drunkenness).

Both sexual sin and drunkenness are life dominating sins. They are very difficult to shake when a person is caught up in them. Regarding sexual sin, Lemuel's mother's emphasis is that kings and leaders face special sexual temptations. "Giving (his) strength to women" means that Lemuel's attention would be fixed upon the lure of adulteresses, and not to governing the people with equity. Similarly, to be filled with strong drink clouds judgment and the ability to think clearly.

The reasons for proper behavior and steering clear of spiritual hurdles like sexual sin and drunkenness is found in verses 8-9 – "Open your mouth for the speechless, in the cause of all *who* are appointed to die. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy." He is to be concerned for those who cannot help themselves. (As with last week's message on work, we note here 'cannot' as opposed to 'will not.') Lemuel's ministry includes advocating on behalf of those "so overwhelmed with fear, anxiety, and isolation as to be rendered speechless before accusers." (Hubbard, 488)

So, we now apply this text –

**1 - Lemuel's mother's teaching was that he not engage in improper sexual relations.**

Christians are to refrain from all sexual relations outside the bond of holy matrimony. The only *biblical* sexual relationships are those between a man and a woman married to each other. For Christians, relationships sanctioned by God's Word are the only legitimate ones. It is not marriage for a man and a woman to merely shack up together and say they are married "in God's sight." God doesn't do, say, or see contrary to what His Word says. The Seventh Commandment teaches not to commit adultery. It is foolishness – sin - for people to engage in adultery and to say that God somehow blesses it because they're married in His sight! We do not have the right to do wrong; nor is it ever right to do wrong! That smells like smoke and comes from the pit of hell! Even so, a gracious God will forgive and restore those who make those relationships right according to the Bible. Sexual sin is not unforgiveable sin – stop such relationships if they don't agree with God's Word.

**2 – Lemuel's mother taught him to be a mouthpiece for the speechless.** *Who are the speechless? Aren't unborn babies in the womb among them?* Surely, those of advanced age who cannot speak for themselves are among them! Few verses in sacred Scripture speak more to the plight of the pre-born and very elderly than this one. As king, Lemuel could do much to ensure the baby in the womb was allowed to grow, develop, and be born! The same thing for the elderly who cannot speak because of age, dementia, or disability. But, each of us can defend the preborn and the elderly! We must teach our children and families that God prizes all life. We must speak into the culture of death that has developed in our nation that we are created by God in *His* image! And, therefore, all life is precious, whether pre-born, living, or elderly! It is so gracious of God to forgive those who had abortions, or instructed others to have one. God is gracious to those who sincerely repent of their sin, grieve over and forsake it, and receive the forgiveness of a Holy God.

Much more could be said; there are many other applications of this teaching we could explore. But, for now, we remember that God-fearing parents – God-fearing mothers – have incredible influence over their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. And, may I say to those ladies without children, today is about you, too. You are dear, valued people because our Savior has redeemed you to Himself and to His Church. Your example and instruction are so very important. There is a sense that the children of the Church are yours, too. Teach our children well; whether you bore them or not. It takes a family, and it takes a Church!

On August 16, 1987, Northwest Airlines flight 225 crashed just after taking off from the Detroit airport, killing 155 people. One survived: a four-year-old from Tempe, Arizona, named Cecelia. When rescuers found Cecelia they did not think she had been on the plane. Investigators first assumed Cecelia had been a passenger in one of the cars on the highway onto which the airliner crashed. But when the passenger register for the flight was checked, there was Cecelia's name.

Cecelia survived because, even as the plane was falling, Cecelia's mother, Paula Cichan, unbuckled her own seat belt, got down on her knees in front of her daughter, wrapped her arms and body around Cecelia, and then would not let her go.

Nothing could separate that child from her parent's love—neither tragedy nor disaster, neither the fall nor the flames that followed, neither height nor depth, neither life nor death.

And nothing can separate God's people from their Savior – He's got us,