

“Her children rise up and call her blessed”

Based on Ex. 19:12 and Prov. 31:28

Preached on May 14, 2023

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father, and from His Risen Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The text for the sermon this Mother’s Day is the 4th commandment “Honour your father and your mother” and the words of King Lemuel from Proverbs chapter 31. An oracle that his mother taught him:

- ¹⁰ An excellent wife who can find?
She is far more precious than jewels.
- ¹¹ The heart of her husband trusts in her,
and he will have no lack of gain.
- ¹² She does him good, and not harm,
all the days of her life.
- ¹³ She seeks wool and flax,
and works with willing hands.
- ¹⁴ She is like the ships of the merchant;
she brings her food from afar.
- ¹⁵ She rises while it is yet night
and provides food for her household
and portions for her maidens.
- ¹⁶ She considers a field and buys it;
with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.
- ¹⁷ She dresses herself with strength
and makes her arms strong.
- ¹⁸ She perceives that her merchandise is profitable.
Her lamp does not go out at night.
- ²⁰ She opens her hand to the poor
and reaches out her hands to the needy.
- ²⁵ Strength and dignity are her clothing,
and she laughs at the time to come.
- ²⁶ She opens her mouth with wisdom,
and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.
- ²⁷ She looks well to the ways of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness.
- ²⁸ Her children rise up and call her blessed;
her husband also, and he praises her:
- ²⁹ “Many women have done excellently,
but you surpass them all.”
- ³⁰ Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,
but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.
- ³¹ Give her of the fruit of her hands,
and let her works praise her in the gates.

It almost makes you cry, doesn't it? This Old Testament description of an excellent wife, mother, field-buying, vineyard planting, hard-working, yet deeply humble, wise, kind, woman. It almost makes you cry because if it were not for this Old Testament poetry you would not get to hear such a beautiful description of what God has made a woman to be. The world will not describe a woman this way. Never. Instead, it pits one part of her against the other. Denies that she can be all that God says she is. Makes her go to war against herself. The world will not let her be strong and humble. Wise and kind. One who can be praised for being a mother, who does not work for herself – but for those God has put into her life – even when she's buying a field or trading her goods in the market.

No. The world looks down on motherhood, because it isn't selfish. The world preaches that motherhood holds a woman back. It discourages her from putting motherhood first, so she can focus on herself – what benefits her – and then uses this destructive selfishness to make her go inside and wage war upon who God made her to be.

But it's worse than that. The world pits a woman against her husband and against her children – saying, "They're all getting in the way. Your focus should be on your career – not your family. Your work is for your benefit – not for anybody else." The world pretends that what fulfills a woman is to be anything other than what she was created to be in both body and soul.

But God's Word proclaims the reality. The high honour given to Eve at creation – was that she would be mother of all the living – certainly this is far higher, far holier, far loftier than being the head of a company that manufactures widgets. The high honour given to Mary was that she would be the mother of the Christ. No, she's not up in heaven wishing she had been the mayor of Nazareth instead. Beloved, the high honour God has given to your mother is that she would be the mother of you – and in God's eyes this is so much higher, so much holier, so much more important than how many millions of dollars she earns on the corporate ladder. And by the way – you required a whole lot more work...

Mothers, yes I'm talking to you who are mothers, the high honour God has given you is that you are the mother of your child, your children. The devil wants you to despise that calling – he wants to make it seem like your children are getting in the way of your success – but God says your children are your success – they are the real life you have brought into the world – they are the living part of this world for which the whole community should thank and praise you - and they are the only thing you can take with you to eternity – and all of it - given to you as a divine gift of God.

Her children rise up and praise her. That's what the oracle said. And it's Mother's Day. And we're in church. Her children rise up and praise her. Not because she listened to the world. Not because she put herself first. But because she fears the LORD. Because she puts her trust in Him. Give her the fruit of her hands. Let her children and all she has done praise her – for she trusts the LORD. She acknowledges God as Giver, and sees her place before Him as good. Exceedingly good. So good that she devotes herself to serving all those He puts in her life. And what does that do? It results in more good. Fruit. Praise. Blessing. For everyone around. This is what God does by giving you a mother.

God gave you a mother. And He gave her faith in Christ so she would pray - for you. Your mother prayed for you – prays for you. She puts it to God for you. Counts on Him. Holds Him to His promises. For you. And she taught you how to pray, how to come to the Lord's house to hear His Word preached, how to kneel at His altar - receive life from Him.

You received life from her, God's chosen instrument. She gave her own body for you. Pressed it into service for you. Sacrificed. Suffered. Lost herself so that she could love you. Like Christ. When God created you within her, using her body and blood, He made her embody the love of Christ for you. She is like a little christ for you. She serves her God by faithfully sacrificing, and loving and caring for you. It's beautiful, isn't it?

Beautiful. And far from easy. Because she loved you enough to discipline you – to NOT let you have your way –to NOT let you just go after worldly pleasure, happiness, possessions, love and honour – she wanted more for you – eternal riches – riches of the soul - divine love – heavenly love – she didn't just nurture your body and let your soul die – she wanted to save your soul - she taught you to fear God – and she disciplined you.

Beloved, do more than love your mother – honour her. God has set her apart, lifted her high above all other persons on earth for you, put her with your father right beside Him. He has hidden His majesty in her. And she is due your deference, humility and awe. Not because of her performance – but because who God has made her to be for you. God has given you a mother.

Rise up and call your mother blessed. Rise up on Mother's Day. Rise up everyday. And rise up on the Last Day, and bless your mother anew for having pointed you to Jesus, prayed for your soul and faith, and lived with her eyes on Christ that you might see the way. Dear Lord God, have mercy on our mothers. In Jesus' Name, Amen.