



St. Michael's Church  
CHARLESTON, SC

SUNDAY, MAY 10, 2020  
MOTHER'S DAY

PROVERBS 31:10-30, LUKE 4:1-13;

PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

*HELP US LORD TO BE SO CONNECTED TO YOU THAT WE MIGHT BECOME YOUR  
DISCIPLES AND THE SERVANTS OF OTHERS.*

*TAKE OUR LIPS AND SPEAK THROUGH THEM,  
OUR MINDS AND THINK THROUGH THEM,  
AND TAKE OUR HEARTS, AND SET THEM ON FIRE.*

Mother's Day in a Pandemic! Oh, we talk about the heroes and those on the front lines fighting the Coronavirus, and there are many, but Mothers, you join the ranks of heroes:

- Becoming the primary teachers of your children
- Putting food on everyone's plate
- While for many working a full-time job with oodles of zoom calls a day!
- Not to mention, organizing those board games at night

On this Mother's Day, we salute you!

Motherhood is not easy, as 8-year old Ben can attest. When school work went online, Ben's mother went into overdrive tutoring Ben and his siblings. Soon his mother discovers she's in way over her head, specifically with the subject of math. All at once the children start to question her about the material and her head starts spinning. The situation escalates quickly, tears fill her eyes, a total meltdown is on its way. She's totally overwhelmed. And it's only day one.

So, she does what any wise mother would do. She orders the kids outside to try and figure out their assignments by herself. And that's when Ben decides to take matters into his own hands, true story. He grabs his journal and writes:

Monday, March 16: From Homeschool

*"It is not going good. My mom's getting stressed out. My mom is really getting confused. We took a break so my mom can figure this stuff out. I'm telling you it is not going good."*

So, today, in the context of Proverbs 31 and Luke 4, and with fear and trembling... I want to unveil the absolute secret of Womanhood. In Fear and Trembling because preaching on Mother's Day is complicated. Let me get real with you. All ladies watching this, there are those of you who are:

- Happy mothers with children...it's a hard vocation but you adore your children
- Others of you are actively and daily praying to have children...
- There are others of you for whom the gift of children never happened and you live with an ache in the heart..
- Others for whom tragically, you've lost a child..
- But from another perspective, for men and women, some have/had great mothers that inspire...
- Others for whom mothers were/are a great source of pain, estrangement, even abuse.

So, for preachers, Mother's Day is a mine field.

But thank you Jesus for the book of Proverbs! Proverbs 31 is the great neutralizer. The Chapter of Chapters for all women across the board, containing all the traits that regardless of any circumstance should be sought out by any woman. Proverbs is a book of the Bible for those who think the Bible is just about dense theology, or weird men with unpronounceable names. Put another way, Proverbs is the Old Testament equivalent to Twitter – the master book of tweets and one-liners! A book with no plots, no stories, and no characters. Just good old fashioned one-liners on how to live right.

Here's a funny favorite. Proverbs 27: *A quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping on a rainy day; stopping her is like trying to stop the wind or hold oil in your hand!*

It has been said that everyone should read a proverb chapter a day, after all there are 31 of them and you can start over every month! But Solomon, the author, saves the best proverbs for last. Proverbs 31, it's like the grand finale to the fireworks. So important is this chapter that each line of our passage begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Ladies here we go!

Highlights of Proverbs 31:

- An excellent wife who can find?
- She is far more precious than jewels.
- The heart of her husband trusts her,
- She rises while it is night and provides food for her household
- She considers a field and buys it;
- She dresses herself with strength
- makes her arms strong.
- makes profitable merchandise.
- She opens her hand to the poor
- She makes linen garments and sells them;
- Strength and DIGNITY are her clothing,

- She opens her mouth with wisdom,
- Her children rise up and call her blessed;
- Her husband also, and he praises her:

Proverbs 31 absolutely shatters the inaccurate stereotype for all who believe that women in the Bible are to be only passive, servile, and judged by what they do in the house!

The Proverbs 31 woman is a

- Manufacturer
- Importer
- Manager
- Realtor
- Farmer
- Seamstress
- Upholsterer
- And Merchant.

Author John Maxwell sums up the Proverbs 31 woman through the '4' A's of:

- Assets
- Achievements
- Attitudes
- And Applause..

Her Assets:

- Trustworthiness
- Influence
- Integrity
- Work Ethic

Achievement:

1. She IS THE brains behind her husband's success
2. She IS a business genius!

Attitudes:

1. Joy
2. Self-less-ness
3. Self-Discipline
4. Compassion

Her Applause comes from:

1. Family
2. And Husband

Proverbs 31 leaves all men saying: She is every man's dream!

It leaves all women saying:

- What on earth is the husband doing while the ideal woman is working so hard?

In fact, ladies you might have the same reaction that preachers have when they hear of the perfect job description for all Pastors:

- The perfect pastor preaches exactly 10 minutes,
  - But every sermon is a book of knowledge...
- The perfect pastor condemns sin roundly
  - But never hurts anyone's feelings.
- The Perfect Pastor Is 29 years old
  - With 40 years of experience.
- Has a burning desire to work with teenagers
  - But spends most of the time with the senior citizens.
- The perfect pastor makes 15 home visits a day
  - But is always in the office to be handy when needed.
- The perfect pastor never misses a church meeting
  - But is always on the streets evangelizing the unchurched.
- AND YES..THE PERFECT PASTOR ALWAYS SEEMS TO BE--
  - IN THE CHURCH NEXT DOOR.

Proverbs 31, like this clergy job description, can leave all ladies totally depressed! Who can attain it? Well, what I have not read to you is the end of the end of Proverbs, where the secret to womanhood is revealed. Verse 30...Wait for it...

Charm is deceptive, beauty is fleeting,  
but a "woman who fears" the Lord is to be praised.

Charm can deceive, and don't hold your breath for permanent beauty. The secret is a woman who FEARS the Lord! Okay, ladies, remember, there is bad fear and good fear. You know that men and women have different fears that are hard wired, fears we are born with. For men, our general fear is loss of respect and significance, in one word – failure. For women, the chief fear is often loss of security and financial despair, in one word – betrayal. In general, bad fear stands for False Evidence Appearing Real – FEAR. It's living a life shadow boxing the unreal. This is the bad kind of fear, not the fear Solomon is talking about. As someone once said: Mother's don't sleep, they just worry with their eyes closed!

But, the good Fear means one who surrenders to God, submits to God. The Good Fear means honoring God, surrendering to Him. Fearing God means living for an audience of one – God. Solomon really believes that this good fear, this reverence is the absolute secret, repeating it over and over!

- Proverbs 1: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge
- Proverbs 9...The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom!
- Proverbs 14: The Fear of the Lord is the fountain of life!

For Christians, we translate Proverbs 31:30 this way: Fearing God means keeping Jesus as our most important relationship - our Anchor! YES, Through the Holy Spirit – Jesus first, then husband, then children, then others! Keeping Jesus first, surrendering all things to Him, and in that process being changed into the most forgiving, the most forgivable,

the most loving, and the most loveable. Which then like a waterfall flows ladies from you into husbands, into children, and into those with whom we live, work, and play! And here's where it gets even more powerful. The end of the end of Proverbs is Chapter 31, Verse 31. Living with God first, means that that perfect job description which no one can attain becomes a by-product, the fruit of a life surrendered to God, instead of something we strive for. A by-product, a fruit of the work of God in you! Verse 31: Give her the fruit of her hands! You see! Living for an audience of one...living for Christ first... turns Proverbs 31 into a natural way of life instead of something to strive for. It just happens organically.

And this is critical my friends, because womanhood is filled with spiritual warfare. Luke 4 tells us what's on the line. Jesus had just been baptized and is led into desert where He is tempted for forty days by Satan, the same devil who tempted Adam and Eve in the garden. Luke 4 tells us Satan is real and not just a symbol or idea. Satan constantly attacks God and those who obey God. We know Jesus HAS POWER OVER all the temptations, but here is the chilling ending of Luke 4. When the devil finishes all the tempting, the devil leaves Jesus temporarily, lying in wait for another opportunity. MEANING, Satan is still active today, and life in the family is Satan's playground. Do you remember that line in our Baptismal service: *Do you renounce the evil powers of this world that corrupt and destroy the creatures of God?* It's in our prayer book because we know Satan wants to destroy families, children, and marriages. The voice behind our bad fear, all of that false evidence appearing real, is authored by Satan! Ladies, Satan wants to convince you that all that false evidence is real! The voice that says:

- “You could never be a Proverbs 31 woman”
- “It's too late for you...there is no hope..”
- “You are defined by your children or the lack-of-thereof..”

It's the voice of Satan. Charm and beauty won't defeat that voice.

Luke 4 proves that fearing God, surrendering to Jesus by calling on His name will defeat that Satan sponsored fear, regret, and discouragement. Which is why we must say: Jesus, I'm living for you, an audience of one, remove the evil one from me.

- When your marriage is hard...
  - Satan I reject you,
  - Jesus I surrender to you..
- When your kids are difficult...
  - Satan I reject your influence over my children..
  - Jesus I surrender, protect my children
- When plagued with regrets...
  - Satan, get out of my head..
  - Jesus I surrender to you, through your Holy Spirit give me joy and a new beginning!

Proverbs 31. Luke 4. There's teeth here ladies.

I think of a mother named Monica. Monica as a wife and mother lived a hard life. Her husband had a violent temper, and betrayed her through adultery. Her son was no better. As a teenager, he was an alcoholic, out of control with women. He even renounced his Christian faith and had a child out of wedlock! Through the Holy Spirit, and in fear and surrender to Jesus, Monica does not go after her son first. Remember the order, God first. Monica goes after the Lord first, FOR her son. Good fear. Monica surrenders herself, her son to Jesus, and through the Holy Spirit her son converts to Christ at age 32. Do you know who her son was? St. Augustine, in the year 386.

St. Augustine would go on to become one of the most important early figures in the development of Western Christianity, and a major figure in bringing Christianity to dominance in the pagan Roman Empire! A man with a child out of wedlock. Monica's fear, surrender, and reverence of the Lord through the Holy Spirit allows the Proverbs 31 fruit to manifest in her life!

Ladies, live for an audience of one. Your regrets, your unmet dreams, and estrangement are all bad fear produced by the evil one. Surrender it all to Jesus.

Today on this Mother's Day, I'm going to ask all ladies watching this to stand. I'm going to ask you ladies to reaffirm, or affirm for the first time, faith in Christ, that dedication to a life fearing, reverencing, and surrendering to Jesus. Please pray with me...

JESUS, I invite you to become Lord of my life. Be my source of significance, the audience I live for. I reject Satan, the bad fear, and any sin in my life. Help me put you in charge, Jesus, over every element of my life, even over my unmet dreams. So that out of that relationship, my life would bear the fruit of Proverbs 31. That I would love the way you love, forgive the way you forgive, and that your dreams would become my dreams. Come Holy Spirit. Forgive me of my sins, come into my heart, and reign in me that I would live for you, an audience of one. Amen.

Now, stay standing, and whoever is in your house with you now, family, friends, I'm going to ask them to stand and put their hand on your shoulder and to pray for you. If you are alone, I'm putting my hand on you from here.

Lord we thank you for these amazing women you have put in our lives:

- Our wives
- Our mothers
- Our Grandmothers
- Our daughters
- Our God-Daughters
- Our Friends..

Help us adore, treasure, and honor them. Help us love them the way you love us. May we never take each other for granted. And may we all live the secret to motherhood - a life spent in the Good fear surrendering to you, Jesus, our rock and redeemer. Amen.