

A Mother's Love

Text: 1 Kings 3:16-28 -- Then two prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. 17 The one woman said, "Oh, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house, and I gave birth to a child while she was in the house. 18 Then on the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth. And we were alone. There was no one else with us in the house; only we two were in the house. 19 And this woman's son died in the night, because she lay on him. 20 And she arose at midnight and took my son from beside me, while your servant slept, and laid him at her breast, and laid her dead son at my breast. 21 When I rose in the morning to nurse my child, behold, he was dead. But when I looked at him closely in the morning, behold, he was not the child that I had borne." 22 But the other woman said, "No, the living child is mine, and the dead child is yours." The first said, "No, the dead child is yours, and the living child is mine." Thus, they spoke before the king. 23 Then the king said, "The one says, 'This is my son that is alive, and your son is dead'; and the other says, 'No; but your son is dead, and my son is the living one.'" 24 And the king said, "Bring me a sword." So, a sword was brought before the king. 25 And the king said, "Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other." 26 Then the woman whose son was alive said to the king, because her heart yearned for her son, "Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means put him to death." But the other said, "He shall be neither mine nor yours; divide him." 27 Then the king answered and said, "Give the living child to the first woman, and by no means put him to death; she is his mother." 28 And all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered, and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice.

Introduction: This is the day of the year when we celebrate our moms. Now of course we should do this much more often, and I encourage you to routinely express your gratitude to your mom for all the ways she demonstrates her love for you. Let's face it, mothers do so much for us: *They cook good food for us to eat; they turn a house into a home; they mend our wounds; they console us when we face life's disappointments; they cheer for us when we do something well;* and, perhaps their greatest contribution is that *they instruct us about life* (**Proverbs 6:20 -- My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching**). Now what exactly do they teach us? I can't speak for everyone, but here are TEN things my mom taught me:

- ***She taught me about foresight:*** "Make sure you wear clean underwear in case you're in an accident."
- ***She taught me about logic:*** "If you fall out of that tree and break your leg, don't come crying to me."

- *She taught me about anticipation* – “You are sooo going to get it when we get home!”
- *She taught me about religion*: “You better pray that comes out of the carpet.”
- *She taught me about time travel*: “If you don’t straighten up, I’m going to knock you into the middle of next week!”
- *She taught me about contradictions*: “Shut your mouth and eat your dinner!”
- *She taught me about contortionism*: “Will you look at the dirt on the back of your neck?”
- *She taught me about genetics*: “You’re just like your father.”
- *She taught me about the weather*: “It looks like a tornado swept through your room.”
- *She taught me about the circle of life*: “I brought you into this world, and I can take you out.” THANKS MOM!

Background: The passage that we read this morning is first of all meant to illustrate the new wisdom that Solomon possessed when he became king. Perhaps you remember how he acquired it (**1 Kings 3:5-9** -- **At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.”** **6** **Solomon answered, “You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day. **7** Now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. **8** Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. **9** So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?”**). AND SO, GOD GAVE SOLOMON GREAT WISDOM. However, tucked inside this story in **1 Kings chapter three** are some principles related to motherhood that are worth considering as we celebrate Mother's Day. Let’s begin with this one.

A GOOD MOTHER VALUES HER CHILDREN (**1 Kings 3:16-20** – **Then two prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. **17** The one woman said, “Oh, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house, and I gave birth to a child while she was in the house. **18** Then on the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth. And we were alone. There was no one else with us in the house; only we two were in the house. **19** And this woman's son died in the night, because she lay on him. **20** And she arose at midnight and took my son from beside me, while your servant slept, and laid him at her breast, and laid her dead son at my breast**). Two women, who lived in the same house and were prostitutes by vocation, were blessed with sons just three days

apart. I say blessed because the Bible tells us that children are a reward from the Lord (**Psalm 127:3 -- Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward**). Alone, with no one to help care for their newborn infants, the women were put in the unfortunate predicament of having to do everything by themselves. This must have amounted to a great deal of effort though they were hardly in any condition to care for their babies. One might even have asked, given the difficulty of their situation, why they didn't discard the children as some are apt to do today. I cannot speak for either woman. **The text doesn't tell us why they kept the children, but I can tell you what the Bible says about the value of children.**

- **They have value because they (like all of us) bear God's image** - Children are made in the image of God (**See Genesis 1:26-27**). This is not said of any other part of God's creation. It demonstrates our value to God (**Psalm 8:4-5 -- ... what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? 5 Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor**). We who are Christians should never forget this truth.
- **They have value because of their potential impact** - It is God's intent that parents would teach their children to follow after Him (**See Ephesians 6:4**). Children can become disciples of Christ that change our world. In a day and age when people are not having many children because of the cost, we have the opportunity to fill the earth with followers of Christ.
- **They have value because of their influence** - Children remind us what it takes to receive the kingdom of heaven. He said this in **Luke 18:17**, "**Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein?**" What childlike characteristics did Jesus have in mind? **(1) Humility** -- Luke records this incident of Jesus and the children right after the story of the Pharisee and the sinner. The Pharisee was self-righteous and therefore not righteous at all in the sight of God. The sinner was humble enough to confess his condition to God and Jesus pronounced him forgiven (**Luke 18:14 -- I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted**). If the Pharisee had been humble enough, he too could have been justified. Children tend to be a lot more like the tax-collector than the Pharisee because they do not think more highly of themselves than they ought. **(2) Trust** -- Because those of us who are older have been lied to, manipulated, and taken for granted at times, we have learned a tendency to doubt and be skeptical. Not so with children. They have a wonderful ability to trust and to act on that trust.

The entire argument of the two women was based on the fact that each one valued her child. **Setting aside the deceit of the one, we can certainly make the case that they believed their lives would be better off with their sons than without them.**

A GOOD MOTHER KNOWS HER CHILDREN (1 Kings 3:21-22 -- When I rose in the morning to nurse my child, behold, he was dead. But when I looked at him closely in the morning, behold, he was not the child that I had borne." 22 But the other woman said, "No, the living child is mine, and the dead child is yours." The first said, "No, the dead child is yours, and the living child is mine." Thus, they spoke before the king). Tragically one of the boys died when his mother accidentally lay on the child in the middle of the night and suffocated him. When she realized what she had done, the woman arose, and exchanged her dead son with the son of the other woman. In the morning, we're told that the second mother awoke to great grief when she saw the dead baby lying by her breast. But upon closer inspection, she came to realize that the infant was not hers. How could she tell? **Because she knew her son.** From the earliest moments after birth, it is not unusual for a mother to start looking at her child and notice everything from the color of the baby's eyes to shape of its head and toes! (Example: **When Jeanne was born the nurse brought in the wrong baby and Laurie knew it instantly**). And so it was that this mother, having gazed at the boy for several days, came to see those attributes that made him unique not just from the other boy, but from all other children.

Have you ever thought about how important it is for a mother to really KNOW her children? That's what **Proverbs 22:6** is talking about. It says, "**Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.**" Sometime this verse is taken as a guarantee that **good parents will always produce good children.** That is not what this verse says, however. A paraphrase might read something like this, "**Train your child according to his way (keeping in mind his individual characteristics and tendencies); when he comes to maturity, he will not depart from the training he has received.**" Every child has natural bents both good and bad. These are the basic tendencies unique to this child. The root word of "**train up**" in the Hebrew refers to the **palate or the roof of the mouth**. Here it describes the actions of a Hebrew mid-wife who after helping to deliver a baby would dip her finger in a paste made of dates and rub it on the gums of the new baby to create thirst and start the baby's feeding instinct. So, the parent is expected to create a thirst in their children for the right things all the while taking into consideration their unique personalities.

SUSANNAH WESLEY was the mother of 14 children, including her famous sons **Charles and John**, who had a tremendous impact for Christ upon the world. It has been said of her that she prayed for one hour per day for each child. **Why didn't she pray for one**

hour for all 14? Because they were different and had different needs. Yet there were some things that she wanted for all of her children. That's why she had certain rules for raising them. **Here were some of her rules:** (1) Eating between meals was not allowed; (2) As children they were to be in bed by 8 p.m.; (3) They were required to take medicine without complaining; (4) To teach a child to pray as soon as he was able to speak; (5) Require all to be still during Family Worship; (6) Give them nothing that they cry for, and only that which is asked for politely; (7) To prevent lying, punish no fault that is first confessed and repented of; (8) Never punish a child twice for a single offense; (9) Comment on and reward good behavior; (10) Any attempt to please, even if poorly performed, should be commended; (11) Preserve property rights, even in smallest matters; (12) Strictly observe all promises; (13) Require no daughter to work before she can read well; (14) Teach children to fear the rod. SUSANNAH WESLEY MANAGED TO FIND THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN PRAYING FOR HER FOURTEEN CHILDREN INDIVIDUALLY, RECOGNIZING THEIR UNIQUENESSES, AND PARENTING THEM WITH A COMMON GOAL IN MIND ... CHRISTIAN MATURITY. THIS IS NOT AN EASY THING TO ACCOMPLISH, BUT A WISE MOTHER WILL DO HER BEST. (Review: A good mother values her children and knows her children.)

A GOOD MOTHER SACRIFICES FOR HER CHILDREN (1 Kings 3:23-28 -- Then the king said, "The one says, 'This is my son that is alive, and your son is dead'; and the other says, 'No; but your son is dead, and my son is the living one.'" 24 And the king said, "Bring me a sword." So, a sword was brought before the king. 25 And the king said, "Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other." 26 Then the woman whose son was alive said to the king, because her heart yearned for her son, "Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means put him to death." But the other said, "He shall be neither mine nor yours; divide him." 27 Then the king answered and said, "Give the living child to the first woman, and by no means put him to death; she is his mother." 28 And all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered, and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice). **The moms in this story had no witnesses to corroborate either's testimony.** If they had, the normal due process would have taken place. But because it came down to the word of one woman against the other, the matter was brought to the king. Solomon had been given "discernment by God to govern his people and to distinguish between right and wrong." The first test of this newfound wisdom was at hand. **This reminds me of the old TV show called "To Tell the Truth." Do you remember it? Usually at the beginning of the show, a statement was read by the host that was absolutely true as it related to one of three people who were to be questioned by a panel of celebrities. The goal was to determine who was telling the truth and who was lying.** That is not too much unlike this story from 1 Kings 3. Two women, both claiming to be the mother of one baby. It fell on Solomon to figure

out who was being truthful and his plan for doing so was brilliant. He ordered that the child be cut in two so that each woman would receive partial satisfaction. Of course, the real mother was willing to give up her son alive, rather than to see him die. She revealed herself by her love for the child.

I am constantly amazed at the intensity of the love that a mother shares for her children. It is absolutely unconditional and sacrificial at its very core. Consider the case of **Deborah Kemp**. Police don't know where she found the strength, but she knows. Her **6-year-old daughter, Ashley**, was in the back seat of her car sleeping, and Deborah wasn't about to let someone steal it and take her daughter as well. As she was pumping gas, a man jumped in the front driver's seat and began to pull away. Deborah, desperate to protect Ashley, grabbed hold of the door and steering wheel and held onto the moving car as she was dragged for several blocks. **"I wasn't trying to be a hero,"** she said later. **"I was concerned for my baby...that was part of me in that car."** Kemp eventually managed grab the thief, pull him from the car and beat him with an anti-theft club device while he apologized and begged her to stop. Meanwhile, the driverless car went out of control and smashed into a restaurant. That's when Ashley woke up. Deborah Kemp suffered only ripped pants and bloodied knees. Her daughter was not injured at all. The suspect didn't fare as well. He was unable to walk. One leg was broken and the other fractured. He also suffered head injuries. Think a good mom doesn't love her children? Guess again.

Let me conclude with a heartfelt message to all our MOMS ... we're here to celebrate you this morning. The Bible tells us that we should. It says, **"Honor your father and your mother."** THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT WE WANT TO DO. So, on behalf of every else, may I say **"thank you"** for all you do to **(1) make us feel special** ... you convince us that we really matter in this world; **(2) for putting in the time and effort to raise us** not in some sort of cookie-cutter fashion, but instead, choosing to take into account our individual bents and uniquenesses while still teaching us the things that matter most and **(3) for sacrificing yourself** day in and day out so we can become all that God intended. FOR THIS AND SO MUCH MORE WE SAY, **"WE LOVE YOU!"**