

Fil-Am Community Church

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1 Kings 3:16-28 (NIV)

“LESSONS OF MOTHERHOOD”

On this day that we honor mothers, it's good for us to think about how much they really mean to us.

A Junior High science teacher lectured on the properties of magnets for an entire class. The next day he gave his students a quiz. The first question read like this: “My name begins with an “M,” has six letters, and I pick things up. What am I?” Half the kids in the class wrote, “Mother.”

That reminds me of the father who was trying to explain the concept of marriage to his 4-year-old daughter. He got out their wedding album, thinking visual images would help, and explained the entire wedding service to her. When he was finished, he asked if she had any questions. She pointed to a picture of the wedding party and asked, “Daddy is that when mommy came to work for us?”

Ralph Waldo Emerson has said, “Men are what their mothers make them” and an old Spanish proverb says, “An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy.”

In the Bible, we find some great portraits of motherhood. I love the picture of the mother of Moses who cared so much for her son that she broke the law in order to teach him the faith of his people. Or, the mother of James and John who loved her boys so much that she wanted them to sit by the Lord's side in the heavenly kingdom. Then, the mother of King Lemuel, who gave some advice to her son about godly living and how to pick a good wife, in Proverbs 31. And, of course, who can forget the mother of Samuel, Hannah, whose story is always quoted during child dedications because of her giving up her child to serve the Lord in the temple.

This morning, let me tell you another story from the Bible about a mother who willingly sacrificed her own right to her son in order for him to live.

A story of a mother who was willing to die inside to see her son survive. Probably, this is the story of a mother you never heard extolled before. So, please listen carefully as we look at her story and the lessons we learn from the pages of 1 Kings in the Bible.

Please get your Bibles and open to 1 Kings 3:16-28 and follow along as I read. This is quite a classic story! But do you know what one of the problems is with classic Bible stories? We often learn the primary lesson and fail to see the rest of the story. This incident is used of God to show He had given Solomon the wisdom he had requested as king. It proves that wisdom comes from God. But, this story also provides lessons of motherhood from an unlikely source.

This morning, let me share with you three lessons of motherhood that we can glean from this episode in the life of King Solomon. The first lesson is

1. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A PERFECT MOTHER.

I do not say this to drag mothers down but to build them up. No one needs to be treated with more tenderness than our mother. Perhaps no one is more caring and conscientious than our mother. Sometimes we are too hard on them. Sometimes they are too hard on themselves.

The two mothers in this story were prostitutes! Their babies were evidently conceived under sinful circumstances. Why did Solomon, king over God's chosen people, even take the time to worry with two prostitutes? These women, and the sinful men who paid for their services, were living out of God's will.

Let me tell you this: **SOLOMON WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THESE TWO WOMEN BECAUSE GOD WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THEM!**

I don't have to convince you that the church should stand for moral purity. But the church should also stand for forgiveness and restoration!

These women were not living up to God's ideals - yet He still loved them! If any of us had to wait for God to love us based on our performance we would all be out of luck!

No, there is no such thing as a perfect mother, just like there aren't any perfect ones among the rest of us. And if there's anyone in whom we should be willing to overlook faults, it should be our mother. Why? Because they've overlooked so many of our faults.

We need to lighten up on mom a little, and moms need to lighten up on themselves a little.

Moms need to laugh and have a good time. Here are a few good laughs for you. These are some experts from the "Children's Letters to God" series, actual authentic letters written by kids to God:

"Dear God, I read the Bible. What does 'begat' mean? Nobody will tell me. Love, Alison."

"Dear God, did you mean for the giraffe to look like that or was it an accident?" - Norma

"Dear God, I went to this wedding and they kissed right in church. Is that okay?" - Neil

"Dear God, thank you for the baby brother but what I prayed for was a puppy." - Joyce

"Dear God, please send me a pony. I never asked for anything before. You can look it up." - Bruce

"Dear God, please send Dennis Clark to a different camp this year." - Peter

"Dear God, I think about you sometimes even when I'm not praying." -Elliot

"Dear God, I bet it is very hard for you to love everybody in the world. There are only 4 in my family and I can't do it." -Nancy

"Dear God, I didn't think orange went with purple until I saw the sunset you made on Tuesday. That was cool." –Eugene

Those authentic letters would make any mother smile! And just in case they don't, find something to smile about and make it a regular habit. Life is too short and God is too good to go around frowning all the time.

Another thing you can smile about if you're a mother is that even though you're not perfect, you are perfect for your family. There is no other person who can ever take your place in that family. God placed you there because he knows that you're the best person who can do the job he has assigned you to. You may think that you're not doing a good job but, if you are raising your children according to God's principles in his word, you are. You may feel guilty sometimes or harsh on yourself because this child or that child has turned out to be different. But let me tell you, that child even if he or she seems to be out of your hand, they are still in God's hands. God cares for your child even more than you do.

I'm sure many of you have heard of Franklin Graham, the son of Billy Graham, the famous evangelist. Franklin is president of Samaritan's Purse, a ministry to the poor, sick, and suffering of the world and also an evangelist in his own right. He wrote his autobiography called "Rebel With A Cause." In his book he talks about growing up as a reckless and rebellious child – smoking, drinking, defying authority, and living apart from God's Word. But one constant in his life as he went through his struggles was his mom, Ruth.

With his dad's busy schedule as a traveling evangelist, his mom was always there. He portrays her as both wise and understanding. But one thing that he primarily attributes his change of life to is God. He talks about God's protection and guidance, bringing key people to his life that made him eventually surrender his life to him.

Let me recommend Franklin Graham's book to you if you are struggling with a rebellious child.

If you go to Amazon.com, you'll read review after review of how this book has encouraged and given hope to many parents. It contains nuggets of wisdom and practical advice on how to deal with a rebellious child.

So, relax. God is in control. Leave it in God's hands.

Mothers are not perfect but when it comes to raising children, you can take hints from a perfect God. One thing I know is that God wants you to pray for your children. Hannah is a great example. She is a prayerful woman. She prayed for a child and I'm sure she continually prayed for her child Samuel throughout his life. And he became a great prophet of God.

God also wants you to train them up according to his word. As Proverbs says, *"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it."* (Prov. 22:6 NIV).

Bottomline is, honor God as you raise your child and imperfect you may be, he will give you honor too in the end. God says, *“Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained.”* (1 Samuel 2:30)

Now, here’s another lesson of motherhood from our story:

2. GOD HAS ANSWERS FOR A MOTHER’S PROBLEMS.

Don’t look for stress-free motherhood, it doesn’t exist. From the pains of giving birth, to the empty nest, to grandchildren and beyond, motherhood is stressful. I think it was last year during our Mother’s Day celebration when I said that the #1 most stressful job is being president of the United States, according to a study. But I would disagree now with that study especially how I see my own wife and other wives perform their duties as mothers.

But what makes it more stressful than being a president? President Obama is president only for four years and maybe eight if he is reelected.

But my wife, or your wife, is a mother for the rest of their lives. Their term will never expire. And they don’t get reelected. It’s a lifetime job. How’s that for stressful living?

Once again, this is not mentioned to discourage anyone. There is good news! God is willing and able to assist moms in the problems or the stresses they encounter.

God didn't give Solomon wisdom so folks would stand around the palace and say "ooh" and "ahh". He gave His wisdom for a purpose. God not only loved those two prostitute mothers, He also loved the little baby in this story. God dispatched His wisdom to Solomon to save the child.

He has wisdom to spare for parenting responsibilities today. He can guide and provide for mothers in all kinds of life situations - single moms, adoptive moms, step-moms, moms with special situations, you name it!

Kids today have special needs. Even dads as well. That's okay. God has the wisdom to give you for the task. He can teach you what to do and what to say in every situation. And he can inspire you to lighten your load.

Many of you know the song "I Love you, Lord". But do you know the story behind it? Let me share it with you straight from the web site of CCLI.

"A remote mobile home gleams faintly in the crisp Autumn sunrise. Within that metal refuge in the high deserts of central Oregon, a young mother is having a quiet time with the Lord. Her toddler is still asleep. Her husband is a full time college student, and the couple is surviving on \$400 per month. They have no home church, no friends nearby, and she does not drive. Even the expense of a long distance phone call might leave them without milk or bread in weeks to come.

Such is the backdrop of Laurie Klein's classic praise song, "I Love You, Lord", written in 1974.

"It was a very hopeless time, a very depressed time," she summarizes. "I felt the poverty of my own life keenly at that point, both emotionally and physically."

"That morning I was so empty," she says, recalling her time with the Lord. "I knew I didn't have anything to offer Him. I asked if He would like to hear me sing, if He would just give me something He would be in the mood to hear."

Klein describes "I Love You, Lord", as a gift from God that emerged spontaneously: "I sang the first half and put the chords with it with no effort," she says. The first half go like this:

I love You Lord
and I lift my voice
To worship You
O my soul, rejoice!

Intrigued and moved by these words, she remembers thinking, "maybe I should write that down." She stopped long enough to get a pen. When she came back, the last two phrases came just as easily:

Take joy, my King
in what you hear

May it be a sweet, sweet sound
in Your ear.

Laurie's husband, Bill, recognized the simple beauty of the song and encouraged her to play it for a local pastor and some visiting musicians. Eventually the song surfaced at Jack Hayford's Church on the Way in Van Nuys, California. There Buck and Annie Herring learned the song and included it on Annie's Kids of the Kingdom. But its greatest exposure was on Maranatha! Music's Praise 4 in 1980.

Moms, you have a problem? God has the answer. All you need to do is to come to him in prayer.

Here's the third and final lesson of motherhood from this story:

3. THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A MOTHER'S LOVE!

The real mother in this story would rather see another woman raise her child than see her baby split in two. That is a great sacrifice. That comes from a mother's heart.

You see, you have to be willing to give up some things to be a good mother. Personal sacrifice is a pivotal part of motherhood. It begins by sacrificing their own bodies by carrying the child around in their womb for nine months. No mother's child ought to get over that sacrifice!

Our mothers fed us, nourished and protected us with their own bodies before we even saw the light of day. I don't know anyone else who loves me enough to carry me around for nine months. But a mother's sacrifice doesn't end there. They keep on giving. They give up sleep for the midnight feedings. They give up personal goals to help their children achieve their goals. Ask yourself how many times you got a new outfit and mom wore the same old clothes, or how many times she gave you the last helping at supper.

Because of this self-sacrificing spirit of mothers, columnist Erma Bombeck had God saying as He was creating a mother, "I am close to creating something very much like myself."

I suppose that is why today is very special - because we recognize that mother's love is probably the closest example we have to God's love. It is a love that goes through the valley of the shadow of death to bring life into being. It is a love that sacrifices itself over and over again and would even dare to lay down its life for its own offspring.

Let me tell you the true story of the Rosenberg family during World War II. Solomon Rosenberg and his wife and their two sons and his mother and father were arrested and placed in a Nazi concentration camp.

It was a labor camp, and the rules were simple. "As long as you can do your work, you are permitted to live. When you become too weak to do your work, then you are exterminated."

Rosenberg watched his mother and father marched off to their deaths, and he knew that next would be his youngest son, David, because David had always been a frail child.

Every evening Rosenberg came back into the barracks after his hours of labor and searched for the faces of his family. When he found them they would huddle together, embrace one another, and thank God for another day of life.

One day Rosenberg came back and didn't see those familiar faces. He finally discovered his oldest son, Jacob, in a corner, huddled, weeping, and praying. He said, "Jacob, tell me it's not true." Jacob turned and said, "It is true, papa. Today David was not strong enough to do his work. So they came for him."

"But where is your mother?" asked Mr. Rosenberg. "She is still strong."

"Oh papa," he said, "When they came for David, he was afraid and he cried. Mama said, "There is nothing to be afraid of, David," and she took his hand and went with him."

Mama Rosenberg went with his son David to the gas chamber because she did not want him to go alone. God doesn't want you to go alone too. And I'm speaking not only to mothers but to anyone here who is afraid and wants a hand to hold on to. Perhaps, if you have felt that you have had to walk through that valley alone so many times, that you will recognize that there is

a hand reaching out to you, saying, "There is nothing to be afraid of. I'll go with you."

And I pray that you will recognize that that one has already gone through the valley of the shadow for you, and made it possible for you to live forever. He has gone through the gas chamber in the form of a cross, died on that cross but rose again on the third day so you may live.

But it comes first with the realization that you are not perfect. The Bible says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." And because of that, you are separated from God and the penalty for sin is death as the Bible says, "For the wages of sin is death."

Death is the problem you face. But God has an answer to your problem. His answer comes in the form of his Son Jesus who died for you. Now, he invites you to accept Jesus in your heart as your Lord and Savior. He'll forgive you of your sins and give you eternal life.

He extends His loving invitation in much the same way that a mother opens the doors of home and invites her children to come back again. He invites you, too.

We honor moms for all the giving they do. They remind us of God who is sacrificial and giving. He gave His only Son for a world of wayward children. That kind of love should not go unnoticed and unappreciated. Respond to

moms with great love and appreciation. And respond to the God who created motherhood the same way.

Let us Pray.....