

The Devoted Mother

Text: Proverbs 31:10-31

As we celebrate Mother's Day, so much comes to mind. My mind goes back to Dr. Robert G. Lee's famous sermon "Payday Someday." In Dr. Lee's message, he pointed out the wicked influence of Jezebel in the life of the king of Israel: "Search the pages of the Bible all you will; study history all you please. And you will find one truth that stands out above some other truths. What is that truth? The truth that the spiritual life of a nation, city, town, school, church, or home never rises any higher than the spiritual life of women. When women sag morally and spiritually, men sag morally and spiritually. When women slump morally and spiritually, men slip morally and spiritually. When women take the downward road, men travel with them. When women are lame morally and spiritually, men limp morally and spiritually. The degeneracy of womanhood helps the decay of manhood." Then he said, "If women have mastered men for evil, they have also mastered them for good--and we gladly make declaration that some of the fairest and most fragrant flowers that grow in the garden of God and some of the sweetest and most luscious fruit that ripens in God's spiritual orchards are there because of woman's faith, woman's love, woman's prayer, woman's virtue, woman's tears, woman's devotion to Christ."

Today I do not wish to speak of the wicked influence of women, but rather the righteous influence of women and in particular, the righteous influence of a devoted mother. Two of my favorite quotes from Billy Sunday are, "The last thing you can rob from a boy is that which he learned at his mother's knee," and, "The hand that rocks the cradle will rule the world." A devoted mother is:

1. ONE WHOM GOD USES TO CHANGE THE WORLD.

When God wanted to raise up the most famous man in the Old Testament, He first raised up Jochebed of whom the Bible said, "And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months" (Exodus 2:2). She not only birthed Moses but saved her baby when he was only three months old. All the little Israeli boys had the sentence of death placed on them in Egypt, but she ingeniously floated him in an ark until he was discovered providentially by Pharaoh's daughter. And even then she was able to rear up her own son in Pharaoh's court.

When God wanted to raise up the strongest man in the world to deliver Israel from the world's influence, he touched Manoah's wife: "And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son. Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Judges 13:3-5). And thus was the beginning of the mighty Samson!

When God wanted to bring the great “king-maker” prophet into the world, He worked through Hannah, a barren wife, longing for a child. The Bible says in I Samuel 1:11, “And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life....” And Samuel was given to the Lord to navigate Israel through the introduction of monarchy and the selection of Israel’s most famous king (until Jesus), David.

When God wanted to bring His Son, the Savior and Redeemer of mankind into the world, He chose Mary: “And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS” (Luke 1:30, 31).

When I hear people ask a woman who is a stay-at-home mom what she does for a living, I would like to interrupt and answer, “God has chosen her to change the world!” Victor Hugo said, “There is a determined though unseen bravery that defends itself foot by foot in the darkness against the fatal invasions of necessity and dishonesty. Noble and mysterious triumphs that no eye sees, and no fame rewards, and no flourish of triumph salutes. Life, misfortunes, isolation, abandonment, poverty, are battlefields that have their heroes; obscure heroes, sometimes greater than the illustrious heroes.” Although this famous author did not specifically mention mothers here, that’s what immediately came to mind upon reading his words. A devoted mother is:

2. ONE WHO WANTS THE BEST FOR HER CHILDREN.

The mother of James and John approached Jesus: “And He said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom” (Matthew 20:21). Oh that mothers today might hear the compassionate voice of Jesus asking, “What wilt thou?” Like this mother, may we abdicate our pride and say, “I want my children just as close to You as possible.” This is a noble desire. This should be the desire of all our young mothers today. Most any mother would go to any length to get their child ahead. This brings me to my final point, a devoted mother is:

3. ONE WHO BELIEVES IN HER CHILD.

It is the cool hand of Mom on the fevered brow of the child that gives the greatest comfort. It is the one to whom the star athlete says hello when the camera is placed on him. “Mom” is often the last word from the dying lips of a man. In one of his best-known sermons entitled “Motherhood” Billy Sunday (1862-1935) gives this story:

“There is a mighty power in a mother's hand. There's more power in a woman's hand than there is in a king's scepter. And there is a mighty power in a mother's kiss - inspiration, courage, hope, ambition, in a mother's kiss. One kiss made Benjamin West a painter, and the memory of it clung to him through life. One kiss will drive away the fear in the dark

and make the little one brave. It will give strength where there is weakness.

“I was in a town one day and saw a mother out with her boy, and he had great steel braces on both legs, to his hips, and when I got near enough to them I learned by their conversation that wasn't the first time the mother had had him out for a walk. She had him out exercising him so he would get use of his limbs. He was struggling and she smiled and said: ‘You are doing fine today; better than you did yesterday,’ and she stooped and kissed him, and the kiss of encouragement made him work all the harder, and she said, ‘You are doing great, son,’ and he said, ‘Mamma, I'm going to run: look at me.’ And one of his toes caught on the steel brace on the other leg and he stumbled, but she caught him and kissed him, and said, ‘That was fine, son; how well you did it!’ Now, he did it because his mother had encouraged him with a kiss. He didn't do it to show off. There is nothing that will help and inspire like a mother's kiss.”

When I visit children in the hospital, the parent I see most often is Mother. The one who continues to visit the prisoner in jail and who is there to the end, even in the case of men who are executed, is Mother. I remember Brother Downs telling me of the pitiful mother who placed her old hand upon the exterior glass wall of the lethal injection chamber, standing as physically close to her son as possible as he lay dying. That's a mother for you; she never gives up, never stops praying, never stops hoping, never stops believing. Today would be a good day to give your mom a bouquet of gratitude. Tell her, “Thank you. Thanks for changing my world, thanks for wanting the best for me, thanks for believing in me.”

- Pastor Pope -