

A MOTHER'S LOVE
Pastor Deborah Oakley – GFC – 5/12/23

Since today is Mother's Day, I am preaching a message entitled A Mother's Love. I want to begin by reading a passage of Scripture that shows us the heart of God toward children. Matthew 18:1-14 says:

The disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child and had him stand among them. And He said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in My name welcomes Me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!

...See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of My Father in heaven. ...your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.

We see several truths about children in this passage:

- Children are important to God.
- We should welcome children and never look down on them.
- Angels watch over children and represent them to God.
- We must become like little children to enter the kingdom of heaven.
- We must not offend children or lead them astray or cause them to sin.

We are living in the days that Jesus said would come where people are causing children to sin! Jesus said it would be better for someone to be drowned in the sea rather than to lead children astray. Yet, there are parents and teachers and government officials encouraging children to embrace sinful behaviors. Especially concerning sexuality. God help us! God hates this because He is holy and because He loves children and does not want even one of them led astray!

Since God loves children so much, it is important that we love them too! Raising children is one of the highest callings on the planet and that's why we are honoring mothers today.

As young children, our entire lives revolve around our mother. We go to our mother for everything we need. To protect us from danger, to kiss away our hurts, and when we need a hug or love - who do we run to? MOM! She is the focal point of our lives, the greatest human being in our world. No one can take her place. She is the one who will be awake all night when we are sick praying to God to make us well. She is the one to wake up early in the morning to make muffins. She is the one who endures all our tantrums.

She is the one that makes sure we complete school projects and do our homework. Mothers are all of this and so much more...and for that we honor you.

Children, make sure you honor your mother as one of the greatest blessings of God in your life. Be sure you thank your mother for all she has done. And never let anyone turn you against your mother. She is your best friend and no one's love will ever be greater than your mother's love. Her love has the power to endure, the strength to prevail and the determination to overcome anything.

Today, we are going to look at three powerful mothers in the Bible. Each of these women exemplifies the love of a mother.

1. HANNAH

Hannah teaches us to pray and to give our children to God. In 1 Samuel 1 we see that Hannah was a woman of prayer. Hannah was barren and wanted a child very badly. So, she prayed and asked God to give her one. 1 Samuel 1:10-11 says:

In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord. And she made a vow, saying, "O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon Your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget Your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life.

Verse 12 says *she kept on praying to the Lord.*

This wasn't just a quick heartless prayer. This was a repeated request, bathed in tears. Hannah was praying for God to give her a child.

But praying doesn't stop after God gives us children! Mothers, one of the greatest things you can do for your children is to pray for them! Listen to the words of John Stiles:

"I have worshiped in churches & chapels. I have prayed in busy streets.
I have sought God and found him in the waves of His ocean beat.
I have knelt in the silent forest in the shade of some ancient tree
But the dearest of all my altars was at my mother's knee."

A mother's prayer is one of the most powerful forces on earth. But it doesn't end here. Once we've prayed, we must leave our burden at the cross. That's what Hannah did. Verse 18 says that after she prayed:

...she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

After spending time in prayer, her face was no longer sad. Prayer changed her countenance. She had left her burden with the Lord and had peace.

You see when you've wrestled with God in prayer for your child you must trust Him to answer. That means leaving your burden at the cross.

That's what Hannah did. 1 Samuel 1:24-28 says:

After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was... and brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. ...They brought the boy to Eli, and she said to him, "As surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of Him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord." And he (Samuel) worshipped the Lord there.

He actually went to live with Eli the priest in the temple.

Moms - when you pray for your children you must be willing to give them to God and trust Him with the results. Look at the results in Samuel's life... Verse 28 gives us a glimpse into little Samuel's heart. It says his whole life was given to the Lord and "he worshiped the Lord there." (At the temple)

Moms, when you give your child to the Lord for his whole life ...chances are he'll be a worshipper. Even at three-years-old Samuel was a worshipper. Later he became a prophet of God that anointed the first King of Israel.

Moms you never know... you could be raising the next prophet of God, the next Billy Graham or Martin Luther King or Joyce Meyer. I believe giving our children to God is a major key to answered prayer.

Throughout the years Joe and I prayed for our children faithfully. But that isn't all we did. We also gave them to the Lord. That meant we had to trust God even when we didn't see results. It also meant that although our hearts were breaking for our children at times, our joy had to be in the Lord. Like Hannah, we had to pray and no longer be downcast.

I really believe that is a key to God answering our prayers. Eventually we saw God answering our prayers for our children.

Mothers, make it your mission to give your children to the Lord. In doing so you are teaching them that their strength is in God. In God's strength they will stand strong.

I love being a grandmother. I get so much pleasure out of watching my daughter raise her children. She cares for them so tenderly and sacrificially.

I remember a time when she was telling me that Kristian (her youngest child) was trying to stand. He couldn't do it on his own so she would put her hand on him and he would stand without any problem. If she would let go, he would fall. But as long as she had her hand on him, he would stand.

When our children are young, we help them stand. But when they grow up it is God's hand that will cause them to stand.

As long as God has his hand on them, they will stand. Can you thank God for that today?

When they grow up, we must let go and let God be the hand that reaches out to them. I know many of you have shed painful tears, prayed agonizing prayers, and fasted countless times for the sake of your children. And I believe God has heard every prayer and saved every tear. His power isn't limited. His mercy isn't in short supply. We serve mighty God who can perform miracles, reverse circumstances, and change hearts. Proverbs 21:1 says:

The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. He directs it like a watercourse wherever He pleases.

Our children's hearts are in the hand of the Lord...and I believe God can and will change their hearts...however... I have learned that no matter how well you raise your children and how much you teach them about God, they have a choice. They must choose to have a personal relationship with God. God doesn't have any grandchildren.

Our role is to pray and trust God...but then we must give our children to the Lord. We must let go and trust God with them. Which brings us to our second example of a mother's love:

2- JOCHEBED

Exodus chapter 2 tells us the story of Moses and his mother Jochebed. Moses' mother teaches us that a mother's love protects.

Pharaoh came up with a plan to kill all the Hebrew male babies.
Exodus 2 tells us that Moses' mother hid him for 3 months.
She took great risks to protect her son.
She put him in a basket and hid him in the bulrushes to protect him.
She watched him from a distance.
She schemed his rescue.
She later became his nanny.

A mother's love does whatever it takes to protect her child. You've heard the phrase "If you hurt me that's one thing, but don't you dare hurt my children."
A mother's love is one of the most protective forces on the earth.

I Corinthians 13:7 says... *Love always protects.*

Protect means literally - to roof over, to cover.

It's one thing to protect our children when they are young.
But as they grow, we must teach them to protect themselves.
They need to know what to protect themselves from.

Remember – we all have the same 3 enemies – the world, the flesh and the devil. And our children need to know how to fight each one.

What Jochebed had to do was to teach Moses how to remain in a tough situation and remain a follower of God.

In the Bible - Egypt is a type of the world.
2 Corinthians 4:4 says that Satan is *the god of this world*.
1 John 5:19 says:

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

Our current world order and culture are under the destructive rule of Satan. That entire system wants to draw us and our children away from the truth of God's word. The spirit of this world is working overtime to eliminate the truth of God from our culture and replace it with deception. And for it not to happen to us or our children, we must protect them by grounding them in God's Word and God's character! Not doing this has dire consequences.

And discipling our children does not just mean to occasionally bring them to church – it's a 24/7 job!

We need to protect them from the world, from themselves and from the devil. And we need to teach them how to protect themselves!

Our third example of a mother's love is

3- Mrs. Zebedee

She teaches us to train our children to serve God. In Matthew 20:20 we read about Mrs. Zebedee - the mother of two sons – James and John. She goes to Jesus and asks a favor of Him. In verse 21 Jesus asks:

What is it you want?... She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at Your right and the other at Your left in Your kingdom."

I know she got a little carried away here, but I love this woman. Her heartfelt request is that her children would be a part of the kingdom. I can't think of a more important role of motherhood than to ensure that your children are a part of the Kingdom of God.

That makes me think of Susanna Wesley who was the mother of 19 children. Susanna had a one goal as a mother: To raise her children to honor God and live for eternity in heaven. Her secret to accomplishing this was her God and her apron. Susanna would pull her apron over her head and pray. Her children knew not to disturb her if her apron was over her head.

Two of her children - John and Charles Wesley - were the founders of the Methodist Movement. John Wesley travelled on horseback - rode 250,000 miles, preaching two or three times each day and preached over 40 thousand sermons about a personal relationship with God.

Susanna's prayers were answered. We don't know if Mrs. Zebedee's prayer was answered. Jesus tells her that it is the Father who determines who will sit on His left and his right. But I love her bold prayer for her children to be of significance in the Kingdom of God.

Sometimes we may feel like our prayers for our children go unanswered. Still, every parent must go before the throne of God and pray for your children - that they will be saved, that they have a heart for God, that they live their lives for God and His kingdom.

What good is it if our children grow up successful in making money, live for their jobs, buy big houses and nice cars, but they don't live for God? What does it matter if they gain the whole world, but lose their souls?

The spirit of service begins at home, with mothers and fathers setting the example. Like Mrs. Zebedee we need to have big expectations. She didn't just pray that her children would be doorkeepers. She wanted them on the right hand and left hand of Jesus. And here's the thing. If we sow love into our children... we will reap a harvest of love.

I want to close by encouraging everyone here to love your mother like she has loved you.

My children are grown adults, but I still love it when they say that they love me and when they do things that show their love for me. Sometimes its as simple as a text saying, "I love you."

Here's some other ways you can show love to your mom:
Do your chores, clean your room and pick up after yourself.
Mothers have one of the toughest jobs and with no pay.
No job in the business world compares to her commitment.
No job is as difficult, so she deserves your respect.

Maybe some of us need to apologize to our mothers.
Mother's Day would be a good time to do that.

Mothers are the ones we usually blame for our failures or disappointments.
We can make her life really hard by behaving rude and difficult.
We can be demanding and selfish.
Maybe we don't spend enough time with her.

Mother's Day is the perfect day to get things right.
Remember Exodus 20:12

Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

In closing I want to say a word to Dads. You thought you were off the hook, didn't you? Well, you're not.

Everything I just asked the children to do.... I'm asking you to do. You see, you are your child's example of how to love and care for their mothers. The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love God and love their mother.

If you never say I love you, or give her a hug, or pick up after yourself, or volunteer to help clean the house, or take out the trash...how can you expect your children to? Ephesians 5:28 says:

Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

Here's my translation: A smart man knows the best way to get his needs met is to meet his wife's needs.

When you love your wife and meet her needs, you're loving yourself.
If you love your self...and I know from experience most men do... then do yourself a favor... love your wife.
If your smart you will care for her and everyone will be happier...
cuz if momma ain't happy, ain't nobody happy.

You are the head of your household, and you have the responsibility to teach your children by example to follow God's commands. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 says:

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Men, God has given you responsibility to teach your children to love God and to love and appreciate their mother.

Mothers – I want to encourage you today to use the love God gave you to pray for your children – give your children to the Lord – protect your children – and raise your children in the way they should go.