

Today is Mother's Day when we honor our mothers and those who have shown us the love of a mother. I found a special Mother's Day card a few years ago. It was one of those big cards written in a little child's printing, like you see in the first grade. On the front cover was a little boy with untied sneakers. He had a wagon and toys were everywhere. He had a little cut on his face and there were smudges all over the card. On the front, it read: "Mom, I remember that little prayer you used to say to me every day." When you opened the card, there was the prayer: "God help you if you ever do that again!" I wonder how many moms have said this prayer at some time as their children were growing up.

Now there's definitely no one like Mom, and while we only set aside one Sunday a year to honor them, in reality we should honor them every day because where would we be without them. Abraham Lincoln was asked what was the greatest book that he had ever read; to which he replied: "My mother." During World II, Franklin D. Roosevelt said that no nation is greater than its mothers. Lord Shaftesbury stated: "Give me a generation of Christian mothers, and I will undertake to change the face of society in twelve months."

While most of us would agree with these statements, there are those of us who may not have had good experiences with our mother or even known them. However, I believe that most of us have had someone in our lives who has provided us with the loving care and guidance of a mother. But this morning, I want to speak not only to mothers but to all of us – fathers, grandparents, friends and neighbors about our responsibility as Christians.

Now there are many appropriate scripture passages for this special day. One of these is the description of the Christian Mother in the thirty-first chapter of the Book of Proverbs, verses 10 through 31. See if these words describe somebody in your life.

Read Proverbs 31:10-31

I found this poem by an unknown author on the definition of a mother; note how similar it is to the passage from Proverbs:

A mother can be almost any size or any age, but she won't admit to anything over thirty.

A mother has soft hands and smells good.

A mother like new dresses, music, a clean house, her children's kisses, a dishwasher and Daddy.

A mother doesn't like having her children sick, muddy feet, temper tantrums, loud noise, or bad report cards.

A mother can read a thermometer (much to the amazement of her husband) and, like magic, can kiss a hurt away.

A mother can bake good cakes and pies but likes to see her children eat vegetables.

A mother can stuff a fat baby into a snowsuit and can kiss sad faces and make them smile.

A mother is underpaid, has long hours, and gets very little rest. She worries too much about her children, but she says she doesn't mind at all.

And no matter how old her children are, she still likes to think of them as her little babies.

She is the guardian angel of the family, the queen, and the tender hand of love.

A mother is the best friend anyone ever has.

A mother is love.

While our focus is on mothers this morning, as we discuss the characteristics of a Christian mother consider how they apply to all of us – father, son, in-law, outlaw, whatever, starting with love.

Now that's the one word that always comes to mind when we think of our mothers - love. The words "mother" and "love" go together like our right and left hands. And the best biblical description of this love is found in 1 Corinthians 13. Do you remember this text? "Love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. Love is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrong. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails."

The love of Jesus Christ flows through the heart of a Christian mother. But this love is not restricted to mothers, it must be demonstrated by everyone of us. In the fourth chapter of 1 John, the Apostle John states: "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God... Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love... Dear friends, since God so loves us, we also ought to love one another." This is the kind of love that Jesus Christ demonstrated in His life and the kind of love that He expects from each one of us who call Him our Lord and Savior.

This love is illustrated in one of the most beautiful scenes in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Listen to how this is recorded in verses 13-16 in the eighteenth of the Gospel of Luke: "People were bringing little children to Jesus to have Him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, He was angry. He said to them: 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. I tell you the

truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' And He took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them." Can't you just visualize that image of Jesus holding the children in His arms, and maybe even singing to them? Doesn't that sound like a mother?

Now some of us may be fortunate enough to have memories from our early childhood of our mother singing to us some of the great songs of faith expressing God's love. As I think back to my childhood, I can't remember my mother singing, and I think that might be where I inherited my lack of talent for singing, but I can still see and hear her playing the piano at home and in church. She was our church pianist for as long as I can remember.

One of my favorite stories is the time that we were having a Sunday night song fest and the preacher was taking requests for hymns from the congregation. Well, I yelled out number 575, *Onward, Christian Soldiers*. My mother told the pastor that she didn't know how to play that particular hymn. He turned and said: "But your son requested it!" To which she replied, while looking straight at me: "I know; we'll discuss that when we get home." So, to this day, I don't make hymn requests in church!

A good Christian watches their words carefully. A Christian mother is a good steward of her tongue and language, using words of kindness, affection and encouragement, as well as correction. The Christian mother is generous with words of praise and cautious of words of criticism that might create a sense of low self-esteem in her children. An old country doctor always began his examination by saying: "Let me see your tongue." It's a good way to start the examination of anybody. Proverbs 21:23 states: "Watch your words and hold your tongue; you'll save yourself a lot of grief." We can either build people up or tear them down with our words. Encouragement is like a peanut butter sandwich – the more you spread it around, the better things stick together.

One of the things that disturbs me on TV today is the image that is portrayed of mothers. There was an old TV show that you may remember entitled *Everybody Loves Raymond*. The mother, Marie, was a dominating selfish person who always wanted her way in everything. She was always putting down her older son Robbie and showing favoritism to her younger son Raymond. Her favorite expression whenever she criticized, put someone down or mettled in somebody else's business was: "I'm only doing it out of love." Right, but that's definitely not the kind of love that Jesus expects from a mother or anyone else.

Speech also involves listening. Have you ever had a conversation with someone who just kept talking and you couldn't get a word in? It's been said that the Good Lord gave us only one mouth, but two ears which implies that we should listen twice as much as we speak. Or maybe it's because He knew that listening was twice as hard as talking. Now if my mother had a fault,

it was that she never stopped talking. I know some of you are thinking that the apple didn't fall far from the tree? If she called you on the telephone, you had better find a comfortable chair and be ready to occasionally say: "Yes ma'am and that's right mom."

But God bless her, when we had a problem, like all mothers she would listen and try to help us through it. My sons and I talk a lot about sports and business, but when they have a problem, guess who they go to, Judy. Our grandchildren have also learned that it is to grandma that you go when you are not feeling well or need to talk. There's nothing as wonderful in this world as the listening heart of a mother. A lasting gift to a child is the gift of a parent's listening ear and heart.

A mother always seems to have more patience. Someone said that a mother's patience is like a tube of toothpaste – it's never quite all gone. A man in the supermarket was pushing a shopping cart which contained among other things, a screaming baby. As the man proceeded down the aisles, he kept softly repeating: "Keep calm, George. Don't get excited, George. Don't yell, George." A lady watched with admiration and then said: "You are certainly to be commended for your patience in trying to quiet little George." "Lady," he declared, "I'm George!" Someone said that patience is something you admire greatly in the driver behind you, but not the one ahead of you.

A critical responsibility of a mother, father, grandparent or any adult is to be a good role model, to set a good example for kids to follow. I hate to break the bad news to you, but kids really don't listen to most of what you tell them. However, they will definitely watch and copy what you do and say – both the good and certainly the bad habits. Being a role model is an awesome responsibility that God has called each of us to as Christians. It is our calling to make sure that the next generation does a better job than we have. However, as you look at the violence and unrest in our country today, it appears that we have failed and we definitely need God's help to correct the situation.

A London editor once asked Winston Churchill for his approval of a list of all those who had been Churchill's teachers. Churchill returned the list with one comment: "You failed to mention the greatest of my teachers - my mother." How do you know if you have been successful in raising your children? Well, I don't know of any magic formula or special checklist; however, a lady in Socorro once told me that you know you have raised your children right, when they grow up and become your best friends. The authoritative and disciplinary role of the parent is replaced by friendship.

There's an old proverb that says: "A father works from sun up to sundown, but a mother's work is never done." Most of you ladies can relate to that statement. Our scripture text for this morning from Proverbs 31 describes a Christian mother as one who "rises while it is still night

and provides food for her household.” My mother died from a traffic accident when she was 76 years old, delivering Avon. She worked up to the day that she went home to be with the Lord, and left my brothers and me a work ethic that we have never forgotten. A Christian mother is a person who is willing to work, to care for her family and others – a person who finds her strength and help in the Lord.

Most importantly, the Christian mother communicates her faith to her children and encourages them to put their trust in God and to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Abraham Lincoln said that no man is poor who has a godly mother. My mother passed her faith on to me and I am here today because of her love for the Lord. A Christian mother is a mother with a voice through which Jesus Christ speaks.

Who is a Christian mother? The closing lines from our text from Proverbs states: “Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.” A Christian woman is one who believes in Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior. She loves Him and seeks to obey Him day after day. She sees her home as a place in which to honor and serve God. I thank God for my mother, my wife, all mothers and all those men and women who have shown us the love of Jesus Christ and brought us to this place this morning. Happy Mother’s Day! Amen