

I thought I would begin this special morning by taking a few moments to remember some of the insightful lessons about life that our mothers have taught us throughout the years. Just listen as I share some of their words of wisdom, for I suspect they may be very familiar to many of you – I know they were to me.

My mother taught me TO APPRECIATE A JOB WELL DONE.

She said, “If you’re going to kill each other, do it outside. I just finished cleaning.”

My mother taught me about RELIGION.

“You better pray that comes out of the carpet.”

My mother taught me about TIME TRAVEL.

“If you don’t straighten up, I’m going to knock you into the middle of next week!”

For me, I learned that one from my dad – not my mom.

My mother taught me LOGIC.

“Because I said so, that’s why – and if you fall out of that swing and break your neck, you’re not going to the store with me.”

My mother taught me FORESIGHT.

“Make sure you wear clean underwear, in case you’re in an accident.”

My mother taught me about STAMINA.

“You’ll sit there until all those green beans are finished.”

My mother taught me about HYPOCRISY:

“If I’ve told you once, I’ve told you a million times: don’t exaggerate!”

My Mother taught me how to MEET A CHALLENGE.

“What were you thinking? Answer me when I talk to you...Don’t talk back to me!”

My mother taught me about WEATHER.

“This room of yours looks a tornado went through it.”

My mother taught me about the CIRCLE OF LIFE.

“I brought you into this world, and I can take you out.” That was a dad lesson.

My mother taught me about ANTICIPATION.

“Just wait until we get home.”

My mother taught me about RECEIVING.

“You are going to get it when your father gets home.”

My mother taught me GENETICS.

“You act just like your father.”

My mother taught me about HARD WORK.

“Being a mother is not easy – if it was, fathers would do it.”

And lastly, my mother taught me about JUSTICE.

“One day you’ll have kids, and I hope they turn out just like you!”

Moms, we love you and we thank you for your very insightful lessons of life.

This morning we are stepping away from **2 Peter** because I wanted to devote a special sermon to mothers and to those motherly women on this Mother's Day.

I thought long and hard about this sermon, first considering several motherly examples from the Bible to draw inspiration from, such as Hannah – who dedicated her son Samuel for the Lord's service, and Jochebed – who protected her son Moses from the Egyptians, and of course, I considered Mary the young lady who delivered our Deliverer – Jesus. I also considered this wonder woman – this ideal woman described in **Proverbs 31**; but I hesitated to use her for fear of intimidating and discouraging mothers who may not feel they measure up. On the other hand, I guess I could have chosen Jezebel – to make every mother feel really good about themselves, but that would have been a really bad idea. So, as I thought about my options, I kept coming back to a story found in **1 Kings**, and I think that's where we are supposed to land this morning. So, if you have your Bible, turn to **1 Kings 3** and we will begin with **verse 16**, and as you are turning there, I want to give you a little bit of background information.

Solomon had just replaced his father David as the new king. King Solomon was probably about 20 years old when he took the throne, and he recognized his need for divine help in his new role – so he prays to God. We are told that Solomon could have prayed for almost anything – riches, and power, and honor, but instead this young man asked God for the most important thing in his new role as the king – wisdom. He asked God for wisdom. Well, God honored his request, and blessed Solomon with the wisdom he would need to rule the nation, and the passage we are going to explore this morning is the first example of this great wisdom.

¹⁶ Then two women who were harlots 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 It happened on the third day after I gave birth, that this woman also gave birth to a child, and we were together. There was no stranger with us in the house, only the two of us in the house. ¹⁹ This woman's son died in the night, because she lay on it. ²⁰ So she arose in the middle of the night and took my son from beside me while your maidservant slept, and laid him in her bosom, and laid her dead son in my bosom. ²¹ When I rose in the morning to nurse my son, behold, he was dead; but when I looked at him carefully in the morning, behold, he was not my son, whom I had borne." ²² Then the other woman said, "No! For the living one is my son, and the dead one is your son." But the first woman said, "No! For the dead one is your son, and the living one is my son." Thus they spoke before the king.

We are told that two prostitutes lived together, most likely in a brothel, they became pregnant, and they both delivered babies only three days apart.

Now, we are not told why these women were prostitutes. We are not given any information about their past. Maybe their husbands divorced them, leaving them high and dry. Maybe their husbands were killed in battle, and these women were left to fend for themselves without support of family and friends. Maybe they were slaves who were forced by their owner into this activity, or maybe they made some really bad choices in life that led them down this dark path – we just don't know, we are not told, but what we do know is that in Solomon's day, prostitutes were one of the most disrespected group of individuals in Hebrew society, the kind of people who would typically be overlooked in their quest for justice – but surprisingly, they get to make their case before the king, which begs the question: **Why did Solomon hear their case?**

We are not told exactly, but in Solomon's prayer to God for wisdom, maybe we find a clue. In his prayer he said,

“Your servant is in the midst of Your people which You have chosen, a great people who are too many to be numbered or counted.”

I would like to think that when Solomon prayed for wisdom to serve as the king, he recognized the people under his rule were still God's people – they belonged to God, and in his wisdom, Solomon knew that in spite of their past, and in spite of their problems, God was concerned about these women and he should be too.

Now, with the king's full attention, the story is told that during the night, one of the mothers had laid on her newborn son, and it died. In the darkness, she took her dead child, and exchanged it with her roommate's living son – hoping she wouldn't notice. But in the morning, as the roommate was preparing to nurse, she discovered the dead child, she knew it was not hers; and unfortunately, the guilty woman refused to admit any wrongdoing, and would not return the child.

So, here are these two women of equal social status, there is one baby, and both women claim the baby is theirs. Since there were no witnesses to the birth of the two babies or the death of the one, and since there was no medical or DNA testing to determine maternity – it was literally one woman's word against the other, even though, it was obvious that one of them was not telling the truth.

What was Solomon to do? Let's continue with **verses 23-25**.

²³ Then the king said, “The one says, ‘This is my son who is living, and your son is the dead one’; and the other says, ‘No! For your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one.’” ²⁴ The king said, “Get me a sword.” So they brought a sword before the king. ²⁵ The king said, “Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other.”

Using his divine wisdom, Solomon decided to produce his own evidence by using the maternal instincts of these women. In other words, Solomon went right to their hearts – for the heart of the problem is a problem of the heart.

So, this new young king calls for a **sword**, which likely seemed strange and unreasonable and maybe even dangerous to those in attendance, but upon his command, a sword is given to the king. Then with the sword, Solomon ordered the baby to be **divided in two**, with each mother getting her **half**.

I can only imagine the thoughts of those who heard this crazy command, and their concerns about their new, and now it seems their very barbaric king. But Solomon was given wisdom from God, so let’s see what happens – beginning with **verse 26**.

²⁶ Then the woman whose child was the living one spoke to the king, for she was deeply stirred over her son and said, “Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him.” But the other said, “He shall be neither mine nor yours; divide him!” ²⁷ Then the king said, “Give the first woman the living child, and by no means kill him. She is his mother.” ²⁸ When all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had handed down, they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice.

In his command to divide the baby in two, Solomon revealed the heart of the true mother. Surely, the true mother wanted her child returned to her – that’s a given, but she was willing to give up her child to the other woman if it was the only way to save the life of her baby. Solomon exposed their hearts, discovered the true mother, and gave the baby to her.

This passage is primarily about the wisdom that God blessed Solomon with; however, there are also some truths found in this passage that speak about mothers, and that’s what I want to focus on.

Now before I present the first truth, I want to say it is not meant to demean mothers in any way, but rather to encourage them and build them up, and the first truth is this – **women do not have to be perfect mothers to be the right mothers.**

We were told in **verse 16** these women were prostitutes. That's what we are told, and granted it's a very small detail in this story; however, with that small detail we can assume that life for them did not turn out as they had hoped or expected. For whatever reason, men were not mentioned in this story which is a big deal in their culture, and we can conclude they are gone, and in order to survive, these women apparently felt they had to resort to selling their bodies.

Now, I'm not making any excuses for these two women and their choices in life, but our passage points out that women do not have to be perfect mothers to be the right mothers. There are no perfect husbands, there are no perfect children, and mothers aren't perfect either – their lives aren't perfect, and they are not expected to be perfect – so moms, quit piling on the unrealistic and unreasonable expectations to be something you won't be. You won't be perfect.

Maybe if you let go of the idea of being the perfect mother, and accept that you will make mistakes just like everyone else, you just might be able to appreciate the messiness and the madness that tends to come with being the right mother.

My mom was far from perfect, and unfortunately, she passed away at the age of 60, but God chose her for me, and I thank God for that – she was God's blessing to me, and if the truth be known, in her imperfections, she was just the right mom for me. You won't be perfect mothers, but you can be the right mothers.

Here's another truth found in this passage – ***mothers have a heart of compassion.***

No matter the circumstances of how this baby boy came into the world, the right mother had compassion for him. In **verse 26**, we are told,

the woman whose child was the living one spoke to the king, for she was deeply stirred over her son.

Those words “**deeply stirred**” speak about her compassion for her child, meaning she hurts in her gut for her child, she experiences distress for her child, and these emotions cause her to act on behalf of her child.

Mothers have a heart, it moves them to action, and there is power in their compassion.

Mary Ann Bird wrote a short story entitled “The Whisper Test.” It is a true story from her life. She said, “I grew up knowing I was different, and I hated it. I was

born with a cleft palate, and when I started school, my classmates made it clear to me how I must look to others: a little girl with a misshapen lip, crooked nose, lopsided teeth and garbled speech.

When schoolmates would ask, 'what happened to your lip?' I'd tell them I'd fallen and cut it on a piece of glass. Somehow it seemed more acceptable to have suffered an accident than to have been born different.

I was convinced that no one outside my family could love me. "There was, however, a motherly teacher in the second grade that we all adored -- Mrs. Leonard by name. She was short, round, happy -- a sparkling lady. Annually, we would have a hearing test. I was virtually deaf in one of my ears; but when I had taken the test in past years, I discovered that if I did not press my hand as tightly upon my ears as I was instructed to do, I could pass the test.

Mrs. Leonard gave the test to everyone in the class, and finally it was my turn. I knew from past years that as we stood against the door and covered one ear, the teacher sitting at her desk would whisper something and we would have to repeat it back ... things like, 'The sky is blue' or 'Do you have new shoes?' I waited there for those words that God must have put into her mouth, those seven words which changed my life. Mrs. Leonard said, in her whisper, 'I wish you were my little girl.'"

That's the power of compassion from a motherly woman – a compassion that changed the life of this little girl and the compassion that saved a boy from Solomon's sword.

The last truth I found in this passage is this – ***mothers are willing sacrifice.***

I think it is fair to say that most of the time, we don't realize the sacrifices that mother's make, and **do you know why that is?** Because – they don't tell you, and if you do find out, it's usually sometime later.

When my father was in federal prison, my mother waited tables at a restaurant. She was good at what she did, customers loved her, and it wasn't until years later that I learned she waited on tables day in and day out with a completely broken ankle – without ever seeking medical care. She served and endured and sacrificed so her three kids would not.

Mothers are willing to sacrifice – they are willing to give up things, they are willing to do without, they are willing to do the hard things – even the heart-

breaking things, to do what is best for their children. Look at **verse 26** again. This mother cried out to King Solomon,

“Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him.”

This mother was probably willing to give her own life for her child, but that wasn't an option given to her, so she was willing to sacrifice her own motherhood for the life of her child, and that's what true mothers do – they sacrifice.

It begins as they sacrifice their own bodies to carry around a basketball in their womb. In their womb, they fed us, nourished us, and protected us with their own bodies before we ever see the light of day.

But their sacrifice doesn't stop there. They keep on giving. They give up sleep and other comforts, things that we often take for granted, for the sake of their children. Ask yourself how many times you got some new clothes while your mom wore the same old clothes. Mothers often put themselves, their wants, their desires, their goals and their dreams aside so their children can achieve theirs. That's what mothers do – they are willing to sacrifice – sacrifice it all if need be.

I recently came across a true story that happened during the Holocaust. Solomon Rosenberg, his wife and their two sons were arrested and placed in a concentration camp. The rules were simple. As long as they did their work, they were permitted to live. When they became too weak to work, they would be exterminated. Rosenberg watched as his own father and mother were marched off to their deaths and he knew that his youngest son David would be next because he had always been a frail child.

Every evening, Rosenberg came back into the barracks after his hours of hard 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 he came back and didn't see those familiar faces. He finally discovered his oldest son Joshua, in a corner sobbing and praying. “Josh, tell me it's not true.” Joshua turned to his dad and said, “It's true. Today David was not strong enough to do his work and so they took him away.” Mr. Rosenberg then asked, “But where is your mother?” Joshua could barely speak and finally uttered, “When they came for David, he was afraid and cried and so mom took his hand and went with him.”

Here was a woman who could not control her circumstances, she could not control other people, and at the cost of her own life, she could not help but being a mother.

When I think about the compassion and the sacrifice of mothers, I cannot help but think of the compassion and the sacrifice of God for us. God is called our heavenly Father, but His heart is often reflected in the heart of a mother – an imperfect mother – but the right mother. Jesus said, in a motherly fashion, when speaking about those who rejected Him,

“How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings.”

Like a mother, Jesus loved people so much He wanted to sweep them under His wings so to speak, but the chicks would not come – and instead they scrambled in other directions. **But did that stop His love?** Absolutely not, for we are later told in **Romans 5:8**,

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Jesus loves us so much, He has so much compassion for us, and even while we had rejected Him, He was still willing to sacrifice Himself for us. That can't go unnoticed, and maybe this morning, you need to open your heart and hear the compassionate Lord whisper to you, *“I wish you were my child.”*

Source Material:

Holman New Testament Commentary, 1 & 2 Kings – Max Anders, Gary Inrig
Exposition Commentary – Warren Wiersbe
The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament – Walvoord & Zuck
Enduring Word – David Guzik