

Proverbs 31:25-31
A Hard Year for Mothers
5.9.21

On May 10th, 1908, Anna Jarvis
Organized the first Mother's Day celebration
In a Methodist Church in Grafton, WVA.

She did so to honor her late mother
Who spent the Civil War
Nursing wounded soldiers from both sides of the war.

Anna considered her mother
The epitome of motherhood.

She gave up dreams of college
To tend to an older husband and four children
And she bore the loss of seven others with grace.

Anna strove to create a day of remembrance for mothers.

After much campaigning in 1914
She witnessed Woodrow Wilson sign into law
That the second Sunday of May
Be designated Mother's Day.

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Proverbs 31 is often used to glorify mothers and wives
Traditionally considered two principal roles for women.

In the late 50s and early 60s
It was Mrs. Cleaver from the TV show, *Leave it to Beaver*
Who personified the woman in Proverbs 31.

She was the one, who with grace and elegance
Managed the affairs of the house
Dutifully cared for the children

And always, had supper ready, dressed in her best
When Mr. Cleaver came home from work.

In the 70s, Erma Bombeck
Embodied the perfect mother in a poem.

When God Created Mothers

When the good Lord was creating mothers, he was into His sixth day of overtime when an angel appeared and said "You're doing a lot of fiddling around on this one." And the Lord said, "Have you read the specs on this one?"

She has to be completely washable, but not plastic; have 180 moveable parts, all replaceable; run on black coffee and leftovers; have a lap that disappears when she stands up; a kiss that can cure anything from a broken leg to a disappointed love affair; and six pair of hands."

The angel shook her head slowly and said, "Six pairs of hands...no way." "It's not the hands that are causing me problems," said the Lord. "It's the three pairs of eyes that mothers have to have."

"That's on the standard model?" asked the angel. The Lord nodded. "One pair that sees through closed doors when she asks, "What are you kids doing in there?" when she already knows. Another here, in the back of her head that sees what

she shouldn't, but what she has to know, and of course the ones here in front that can look at a child when he goofs up and say, "I understand and I love you," without so much as uttering a word."

"Lord," said the angel, touching his sleeve gently, "Rest for now. Tomorrow..." "I can't," said the Lord. "I'm so close to creating something close to myself. Already I have one who heals herself when she is sick, can feed a family of six on one pound of hamburger and can get a nine-year-old to stand under a shower."

The angel circled the model of the mother very slowly. "She's too soft," she sighed. "But tough!" said the Lord excitedly. "You cannot imagine what the mother can do or endure."

"Can she think?" "Not only think, but she can reason and compromise," said the Creator.

Finally, the angel bent over and ran her finger across the cheek. "There's a leak," she pronounced. "I told you, you were trying to put too much into this model."

"It's not a leak," said the Lord. "It's a tear." "What's it for?" "It's for joy, sadness, disappointment, pain, loneliness and pride." "You're a genius," said the angel.

The Lord looked somber. "I didn't put it there."

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One almost gags at the sentimentality here.

The reality, though, is a bit different.

In actuality, mothers and wives are overworked, underpaid
And little appreciated.

Listen to what Lyz Lenz has to say
In an article in Time Magazine, August of 2020

Motherhood is valorized in American culture because we don't want to admit the truth: we have built an entire economy on the backs of unpaid and poorly paid women.

Even as gender roles have shifted in the U.S., the expectation that the mother will be the parent primarily responsible for maintaining the household and taking care of the children, no matter what else she has on her plate, is still as true today as [before]. Never has this been clearer than during the pandemic.

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It has been a difficult year for everyone, for sure.

However, it has been a particularly tough year for moms.

When the pandemic shut down mom's support system
In-person school, camps, daycare
Play dates, and even neighborhood playgrounds

Mothers were forced to pick up the slack.

Many quit their jobs
Worked less hours
Or worked from home.

With school closings

Mothers had to add to their already busy schedule

The overseeing of their children's online education.

It was mom who shifted her schedule

To adjust to the new normal.

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According to a Time Magazine article

A recent survey of 60,000 households

Where couples are both employed

Mothers reduced their work hours

Four to five times more than fathers.

In another article, this time in the Richmond Times Dispatch

In this past Sunday's paper

The pandemic has resulted

In an increase alcohol consumption for all adults

But more specifically women.

The upsurge in drinking is attributed to the increased stress

Of balancing work and home duties

As well as experiencing greater isolation.

"Women have different elements to face than men," said Tara Lloyd, program director manager for The Healing Place for Women, a recovery center that opened in December in South Richmond. "We have to do everything from working to raising a family to keeping the house running. So when we fall, it's devastating."

It has been a hard year for moms.

And if you're are a black or brown woman

Most likely you've had an even harder year.

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We need to reimagine the woman's role in our society.

Mrs. Cleaver no longer fills it!

We need to find equitable solutions

For women in the workforce

And those who decide to stay at home.

We need affordable child care solutions

Equitable compensation for equal work

Safety networks for women and children in crisis.

Did you know the average cost

Of center-based daycare in the United States

Is \$11,896 per year (\$991 a month) for infants

And \$10,158 per year (\$847 a month) for toddlers.

According to ChildCare Aware of America.

We need to change our cultural expectations

For women and mothers.

We cannot expect them to work fulltime

Be the primary caregiver for the children

And take primary care of the household.

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Our passage today
The national Mother's Day holiday
And Erma Bombeck's poem
Sets up moms for failure in today's society.

We expect moms to be superheroes.

We expect them to do everything with a smile on their face.

We expect them to fulfill the role of wife and mother
As exemplified in Proverbs 31

And when they don't we wonder what's wrong with them.

I know a lot of women who have done a remarkable job
Balancing work, home, and child-rearing.

They have persevered through a tough year.

But they are human too.

And this pandemic year has taken its toll.

We need to recognize their stamina and courage
In the face of such obstacles.

The year 2020 has been declared the year of the mother.
With good reason.

For the most part, mothers have risen to the occasion
And have managed through a particularly tough year.
Give them the credit they deserve.

Mothers, this past year
Has been one of frustration, anxiety and stress.

You have felt more isolated and alone than ever before.

But know help is there.

Not only in the form of husbands and grandparents
Colleagues and friends

Not only in the form of mental health care
But in the form of the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle Paul says in Galatians
That if we learn to live by the Spirit
We can also be strengthened by the Spirit.

And in doing this
We can enjoy the fruits of the Spirit.

**Galatians 5:22 . . . love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,
generosity, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control.**

God is there for you.

God invites you to dwell in God's presence.

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In closing, let me share the rest of Anna Jarvis' story.

After working so hard for a Mother's Day holiday
In just a matter of a few years
She regretted doing so.

She hated to see in so little time
What it had evolved into.

She hated to see consumerism take over the holiday
With its mass-produced cards
And Mother's Day box of chocolates

She hated to see the white carnation flowers
Jacked up in price every time May came around.

Eight years later, in 1922, she wrote

A printed card means nothing except that you are too lazy to write to the woman who has done more for you than anyone in the world."

And candy! You take a box to Mother—and then eat most of it yourself. A pretty sentiment!"

May we recognize the hard role
Mothers have had to play this past year.
And then do our part to support them.

And let us lift up our voices in praise
At how mothers have been the glue
That has held families together
Through this difficult time.

Proverbs 31:31 CEV Show her respect—praise her in public for what she has done.