

**Proverbs 31:10-31**

10 A capable wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. 11 The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. 12 She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life. 13 She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands. 14 She is like the ships of the merchant, she brings her food from far away. 15 She rises while it is still night and provides food for her household and tasks for her servant-girls. 16 She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard. 17 She girds herself with strength, and makes her arms strong. 18 She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night. 19 She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle. 20 She opens her hand to the poor, and reaches out her hands to the needy. 21 She is not afraid for her household when it snows, for all her household are clothed in crimson. 22 She makes herself coverings; her clothing is fine linen and purple. 23 Her husband is known in the city gates, taking his seat among the elders of the land. 24 She makes linen garments and sells them; she supplies the merchant with sashes. 25 Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. 26 She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. 27 She looks well to the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. 28 Her children rise up and call her happy; her husband too, and he praises her: 29 "Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all." 30 Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. 31 Give her a share in the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the city gates (NRSV).

Today is Mothers Day and it is a great day and fun filled day for many. It is a family time of togetherness honoring our mothers. However, it is really a day for all women. At this particular timer in the life of the church I need to point out that it may not be everyone's favorite dsy. Some people may be sad because your mother has passed away. It can be an especially sad time for mothers that have lost a child or anyone that may have recently lost a loved one. For many people Mothers Day may never be the same. Some have longed to be a mother but due to some physiological reasons have not been able and yearn to have a child visit and hear the words "I love you mom." So, as we celebrate this wonderful and happy occasion, let us remember and reach out to those who may not feel like celebrating.

God speaks to us through the scriptures and in Today's Scripture we see that God praises women, values them highly, and women exemplify the call of service. The Scripture lists a number of examples, many of which compliment the teaching of Jesus and our call to serve. She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out to the needy. She is wise and teaches kindness. A woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. This is the main thing. To fear the Lord is a matter of reverence. For her diligence in caring for others she is surpassed by none. She is highly praised.

Today I need to talk something that is very important and dear to this church and our ministry here. And that is our recent loss. We suffer the loss of a very dear loved one. Rev. Jack Hamilton was your minister and shepherd active in your life and the life of this ministry for over 30 years. For many, if not most of you, he married you, baptized you, and provided pastoral care when you mourned the loss of a loved one. The average tenure for a minister is between 5 to 7 years. Anyone that stays over that length of time is in a healthy relationship that is based on love; the love of God and the love we have for each other. It is also a healthy relationship that is focused on Jesus. You and this ministry grieve his passing and suffer from your loss.

We all Grieve. We grieve whenever we lose anything important. Grief is a natural part of living; we cannot live without experiencing it. There is a long list of things that can cause us to experience grief. You could lose your home or be forced to move away from family and friends. You could have health problems, lose your eyesight, or hearing, or suffer from a natural disaster, and experience financial ruin. You could lose a job, have to change careers, or lose a pet that you love. They are all a natural part of the human experience. There are also many ways we can deal with loss. Staying busy is a good thing. People that are grieving need to carry on as much of their usual activities as possible so that they can deal with and work through their problems because the biggest hurdle is accepting it. Then comes the isolation and depression. Many may even question God. I take this time to point out that it is OK to question God when you grieve and even get mad at God. However, you must get through it and come to terms with who and what God is.

The verse Jesus wept tells us that even Jesus Christ himself experienced grief and it shows us that Jesus has a special caring quality. It is important to remember that God is no stranger to loss. Jesus faced isolation, grief, and suffered. It is very important for us to know and understand this because in our darkest days we can appeal to a suffering Savior. We are designed to run with the power of the Holy Spirit within us. The stronger your faith is, the better you will be able to deal with any kind of loss. This does not mean that you do not grieve. Those who face up to the loss by wrestling openly and honestly with it come through the experience stronger and are better able to help those that are grieving. Those with strong faith come through the setbacks of life with more mature and healthy faith and are better able to help others develop deeper faith in God as result of grief.

We are a community of faith. As a community we are concerned about one another, especially those who mourn. Our loss is special to us. We can feel like others don't understand just how great this loss was. They go about doing other things while we are left all alone with our sorrow. Friends show concern for one another and it is good to be with those who mourn, to be near them, and to be available to help. In time life does become meaningful again.

We celebrate the women in our lives. We honor and remember our mothers. A challenge goes out to the men to reach beyond gifts and taking mothers out to dinner. Take care of the women in your life make sure you show her how special she is and how much you appreciate her. There is also a challenge to all of us to celebrate God and Jesus and reach out to the women in your life that may not feel like celebrating.