

Rev. Janet R. Doyle

Elmer Presbyterian Church

6th Sunday of Easter

Mother's Day

May 10, 2026

Scripture: Proverbs 31: 10-31; John 14:15-21

Sermon: Women Who Teach Us

The Proverbs 31 woman is a portrait of wisdom, strength, and virtue, rather than a checklist for perfection. She is defined by her "fear of the Lord," which drives her to be a trustworthy, hardworking steward of her home, finances, and community, ultimately displaying that inner character matters more than outward appearance.

Key Themes of the Proverbs 31 Woman (Proverbs 31:10-31):

**Foundation of Fearing the Lord:** Her wisdom, strength, and dignity come from a deep reverence for God, not merely from being busy.

**Trustworthy and Valuable:** She is described as far more precious than jewels, a woman of noble character in whom her husband has full confidence.

**Diligent and Entrepreneurial:** She works willingly with her hands, manages household finances, buys land, and runs a business, ensuring her family is prepared for the future.

**Generous and Kind:** She extends her care beyond her household to the poor and needy.

**Wise Counsel:** She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.

The Proverbs 31 passage is meant to inspire excellence, not to make women feel overwhelmed or compare themselves to an impossible standard. The ultimate goal is to cultivate a heart that fears the Lord, which naturally influences actions. Rather than striving to be a "perfect" woman, she is a woman surrendered to the only One who is perfect, relying on His strength. The passage concludes by highlighting that while charm and beauty are fleeting, a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

The Proverb 31 woman is a "composite" sketch of a life, not a checklist for a single day. Just as one photo doesn't define a whole life, her varied achievements represent a lifetime of wisdom and grace. Comparing this woman to a ruby, which is formed under immense pressure and heat. She is valuable not because her life is easy, but because she has developed resilience through her fear of the Lord and dedication to others. She is also a steward of God's resources. She uses her time, talent, and treasure to build God's kingdom rather than just her own comfort. While the world worries, she can laugh at the future because her security is not in her circumstances but in her God-centered character. Her hard work serves others, not just herself. She makes garments for her family, but also extends her hands to the needy. She is an entrepreneur with a servant's heart.

I am sure we can think of women in our own lives that this Proverbs 31 woman describes or maybe we are that Proverbs 31 woman to our family or community. This chapter is an inspiring example of what a godly woman seeking wisdom can be like.

The path to wisdom is not the path commonly taken. You will be going against the flow to become a wise person, and people will wonder why you're headed in a different direction than everyone else.

But the result is that you will also be seen as a valuable person

Ultimate wisdom came to us in the form of Jesus Christ. He freely offers us what we really need to live in the world.

Our scripture lesson from John 14 tells us about a special gift that Jesus would give to us when he left us. We gather today to honor and remember our mothers, those who are here with us today, and those who are with God.

In these words of Jesus in John 14, we find a profound message of love and presence, a message that echoes the heart of what it means to be a mother and woman of God.

In the first part of our reading, Jesus promises the coming of the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who will be with us forever. This Spirit of Truth is a constant presence, a guide, a helper, much like the role of mothers or those who care for us in our lives.

Mothers are often our first advocates, our first guides, teaching us right from wrong, guiding us towards truth, and helping us navigate the complexities of life. Likewise the Holy Spirit is our ultimate Advocate of the Spirit of Truth.

Secondly, we must understand the importance of love in our relationship with God. Jesus said that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments. Our love for the Lord should not be just an emotional attachment but a profound, life-changing commitment that leads us to obey His teachings. Doing so, we will experience a deeper connection with Him and grow in our faith.

Mothers and those who live out the role of Mothers, are great witnesses of this type of love. To love our neighbor or our enemy, is to love them as God loves. God calls us to keep God's commandments. So loving others is expressing God's love and expectation that what follows love is obedience and faithfulness to God.

Jesus also promises that he will not leave us as orphans. This promise is a poignant reminder on this Mother's Day. Just like a mother's love, God's love is always present, always near. Even in the moments when we feel alone or lost, God, through the Holy Spirit, is there, providing us with comfort and guidance.

Another focus point is the promise of the Holy Spirit, also referred to as the Helper, and the Comforter. Jesus knew that His physical presence on earth would come to an end, but He did not want to leave His followers alone and without support. In His infinite love and wisdom, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to be with them and with us forever. Likewise, Mothers and those who help and comfort as Mothers are examples of this nature of compassion and support.

In the latter part of this passage, Jesus says, "Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me." Mothers, too, instill in us values, commands if you will, that we are meant to keep to show our love for them. They teach us to be kind, to be just, to love others as we would like to be loved. When we live out these teachings, we honor not just our earthly mothers, but also our Heavenly Father.

It is crucial to recognize that the world cannot receive the Spirit of Truth because it neither sees nor knows Him. As believers, we have been granted a special gift, the ability to know and experience the Holy Spirit in

our lives. This gift is a mark of our relationship with God and sets us apart from the world.

Jesus tells us that because He lives, we will also live. This promise is reminiscent of the life-giving role of mothers. Mothers give us life, nurture us, and prepare us for the world.

In a spiritual sense, they help us to realize the promise of eternal life by teaching us to follow Christ's teachings and commands.

As we honor our mothers today, let us remember these parallels between the love of God, as expressed in John 14:15-21, and the love of our mothers. Let us be thankful for their guidance, their support, their love, and their constant presence in our lives and always in our hearts.

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" 1 John 3:1NIV

Women, you are meant to be Spirit-filled helpers, comforters, counselors, advocates, teachers, intercessors, peacemakers, and guides for children. The key to being all of these things is only by the power of the Holy Spirit!

Remember the Proverbs 31 woman fears the Lord because she sees the wisdom in wanting to obey what God tells her to do and to honor the Lord with her whole life. And what is "the fear of the Lord" in Proverbs? The beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7, 29; 2:5; 9:10; 15:33).

It is her heart for honoring the Lord with her life, and thus living with true wisdom, that God wants women to imitate and follow.

Erma Bombeck, was a very funny lady, a gifted writer and a devout Catholic woman. The following column was her Mother's Day column for May 12, 1974.

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 order?"

- She has to be completely washable, but not plastic;
- Have 180 movable 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 pairs 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, “Go to bed. Tomorrow..”

“I can’t,” said the Lord, “I’m close to creating something so 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 a mother very slowly. “It’s too soft,” she sighed.

“But she’s tough!” said the Lord excitedly. “You cannot imagine what this mother can do or endure.”

“Can it think?”

“Not only can it think, but it 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 push 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 are a genius,” said the angel.

The Lord looked somber. “I didn’t put it there,” He said.

**Poem: A Mother’s Love (1993 Genie Graveline)**

No gift on earth is greater,  
No treasure held above,  
The joy that comes from knowing  
A Mother’s endless love.  
In spite of how it’s tested,  
It grows from year to year,  
Providing strength and comfort..  
It “gently” draws us near.  
It warms and protects us,  
And guides us from afar,  
Shedding light upon us,  
Like a bright and shining star.  
And when all things are measured,  
Not one shall rise above,  
Or be compared in value,  
To a Mother’s endless love!