

Sermon preached by Rev Chris Moroney at the Healing Service at St. Andrew's Cathedral,  
 Sydney on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2007. Reading: Psalm 27 & Proverbs 31  
 Topic: "Someone You Can Trust"

"Happy Mother's Day to all the blood mothers and to all the spiritual mothers of our church."

So began a service that I attended in another place on Mother's Day. It was a lovely reflection of the way in which people care for one another. Many of us would talk about birth mothers and spiritual mothers.

But as we think about Mother's day and motherhood,

I want us to reflect on the Ideal and the less than perfect experiences that many people have in their family life.

I want us to think about the healing love of God for all of us who go through pain and sadness as we think about our childhood or our own experience of being a mother.

## 1. THE VALUE OF IDEALS

When we look at Proverbs 31 we have laid out for us a great ideal of what it means to be a mother and a wife.

- Directions

When you know what God's ideals are it is a great help in knowing how we should live, what we should do, how we should try to make things better.

In this case the ideal here is presented as looking after the family.

A good wife is first of all trustworthy(v11) concerned for the welfare of her husband(v12), busy with hard work, but she doesn't mind, it is a labour of love(v13).

She is well organized and self disciplined and careful with money(v15-18). This ideal wife has a way of planning ahead, anticipating problems (v25).

- Persistence

This idealized wife shows a lot of self sacrifice over a long period of time and in many different areas. It is an important reminder to us of all the hard work that is involved in being a wife and mother.

Someone once said that a man's work is from sun to sun but a mother's work is never done. And it is so true that there is a never ending story for the one who tries to look after the household. Being a mother takes a lot of hard work and thought and persistence, even when you are tired and worn out.

- Evaluation

In some ways it is a good thing that our society stops to make special day of saying thank you to mothers for all that selfless dedication. But it would be a shame in some ways, if it only happened on one day of the year. It is better to see it as a reminder that we should always be thankful to those who care for and nurture us.

In Proverbs 31 this ideal wife receives praise from both her ideal children and her ideal husband(v28).

It is good for us to pause and reflect on how often and how well we have expressed our thanks to our mothers for the care and love they have shown to us.

But the most important assessment is that which comes from the Lord. See verse 30. The best mother is one who fears the Lord. That is the best ongoing motivation for all the hard work that goes into being a mother and a wife.

- Thankfulness

Before we talk about the various problems that we may have because our mothers were perhaps less than ideal, it is important for us to pause and reflect on the theme of thankfulness.

For all those times when our mothers nurtured us and were there for us and loved us and supported us and fed us and protected us and taught us, especially if they taught us about the Lord, let us always express our thanks, to them, if they are still alive, and to God who provided them for us.

For some of us it may be our natural mothers. For others it may be the mother and father who adopted us, or our foster parents, or a step mother, or even the spiritual mother at the church who took us under her wing and helped us to grow spiritually and emotionally.

## 2. THE DANGER OF IDEALS

Having said all the above, it remains true that not everyone has had an ideal mum. And there may be times when people can feel cheated or resentful that their upbringing was less than perfect.

- Despair

Sometimes it can lead to despair. You might have the idea that you are the only one who had trouble in their family life. Mother's Day can sometimes give that impression with the advertising and the news portraying everyone as happy and loving.

Many people have had very difficult family situations. In fact more people than you might realize. IN our modern society more and more people are going through life without a stable family life. Broken marriages lead to broken families. The push in our modern frantic world is for more and more people to focus on themselves and to spend less and less time in face to face situations with their children. Some people have come through not only situations of neglect, but also situations of abuse, whether it was verbal abuse, or physical abuse or some other form of mistreatment. And their mother did nothing to make it better. Where do people go to find hope for the future and healing for themselves

- Surrender

As well as despair and a sense of isolation there are other people who feel that all they can do is just surrender to the situation. They feel as though there is no way forward, no way in which things are going to get better. And so they give up. And life becomes fairly plain and humdrum and ordinary. Any thoughts about the ideal, just leaves them flat.

There seems no way that their life can ever have those elements of love and care and commitment in it. They never experienced those things and they can never give them to anyone else. It is just not part of their world.

- Criticism

For others their less than perfect upbringing becomes a basis for criticizing their parents, or those who were caring for them. “

Whenever people talk about happy families they keep going back to being critical of their own life experiences and blaming others for the way they are now. For some people this critical edge becomes an excuse for bad habits and bad attitudes and even a self critical stance, rather than a self affirming position.

- Resentment

And where there are bad feelings about the past there can come a motivation of resentment and unforgiveness. As we blame those who have hurt us, and become fixated on making them suffer, so we limit ourselves and write our own destiny of destruction.

If we ourselves have not learnt to trust those who were meant to care for us, then we will always have trouble trusting others and forming strong friendships with people around us. And that is true for the level of love and care that we are also able to show to our children and other members of our family.

Psalm 27 is a cry from the heart for the person who despairs of life and does not have anyone who they can trust. It is a Psalm that give us some important clues about how to pray for healing, especially in terms of the healing of our relationships, because God is the one person who we can always trust absolutely.

### 3. SOMEONE YOU CAN TRUST

This Psalm of David reflects a situation where he is faced with all sorts of enemies. He has troubles in his life and those troubles starts with a capitol T.

The thing that keeps him going is his relationship with God. This gives him strength to face opposition in terms of the armies he must battle or the internal conflicts in his own family life.

We need to ask the question of ourselves.

How well do I know God?

Can I identify with King David?

Is God my backstop, my safety net in the trapeze of life, my security, my safe stronghold?

- Knowing God (V1)

Knowing God give us confidence to face the future with confidence and purpose and hope. We can pray to God for strength and wisdom and healing.

Notice that he expressed his longing in his relationship with God in Temple terms. The Temple, or in David's day, the tabernacle was the place where God was seen to meet with his people. It was a holy place or priests and sacrifices. The people were reminded of their sin and their failure to live God's way and the judgement of God

they deserved. The blood that was spilt was the animal sacrifices which was God way of reminding them of their sin, but also providing a substitute as an expression of his grace. (V4-5)

The Temple and the priest and the ceremonies and the sacrifices all look forward to Jesus, don't they.

For us, on this side of the New Testament it is through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ that we can know God's gracious forgiveness for all our wrongdoing.

- Feeling troubled

There are times when we can feel that the whole world is against us. See how David put it. (V22,3)

We can come to God with all our problems and histories and fears and frustrations. He loves to hear our prayers. He longs to answer our prayers and bring healing to our lives.

- Feeling abandoned

And when we feel that no-one loves us and everyone is against us...when we feel that we have been rejected and abandoned, we know that God will never ever leave us alone. This is especially important for those who might have found out later in life and their mother gave them up for adoption at birth and they have had no contact with their birth mother at all...(V7-12)

Whatever our situation, however badly we have been treated we should never doubt God's unfailing love for us and his will for us to be healed and whole and growing as the Christian person that he wants us to be and that we can be under his gracious love and nurture.

Yes it means that we need to be forgiven ourselves, and we can be, for all the foolish things we have done, for all the wrong things we have done, for all the terrible things we have said and done to other people. We need God's forgiveness and his grace to move forward. And we can have that through Jesus, through his death on the cross and his risen power through his resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit to every believer.

And yes, the way forward will involve learning to forgive those who have hurt us so badly. And that is a gradual and ongoing process for all of us.

But we can only move forward in God's strength, not our own. And so we believe that as we pray for God healing hand to be on our lives we will know more and more that our God is someone who we can trust implicitly and completely with every part of our lives, in this world and in the world to come.

- True security (V13,14)

And so tonight, we think about Mother's Day, a time of happiness for many and a time of sadness for many others.

It is also a time of thankfulness for all the good blessings that have come to us through our mothers from the hand of God. It is also an opportunity to take the time to pray through and work through some issues that come up for us because we live in a less than ideal world. To that extent it can be a time for healing and personal growth as we come closer to God is dependence and trust and prayer.

And for anyone who has suffered that sense of rejection expressed in verse 10, remember the Lord will always be there for you.