Sunday 05/12/24 – Panama Methodist Church

Sermon Title: "Why the women in our lives matter!"

Old Testament Scripture: Proverbs 31:10-31

New Testament Scripture: Ephesians 5:25-33

Old Testament Scripture: Proverbs 23:22-25

Old Testament Scripture: Psalm 139:13

(Slide 1 – Skit Guys Video)

How many of us here today have had times in our lives when we have taken for granted the women in our lives? I know I have. Did we always visit or call our grandmas, and or call our mothers and the other women in our lives enough?

There have been times in my life that I got so caught up in my own life that I regret not calling both of my grandmothers more or calling my mom and stepmother more. We all know how it is, life gets busy, and we just seem to forget these things sometimes. Yet would any of us really be where we are today without the women in our lives? I know that I would not be. Like the video that we just saw though, we probably have all been guilty of not appreciating moms and other women in our lives at times.

In fact, while I picked on my mother Susan last Sunday for asking me a ton of questions about Panama, I remember that while I was in college my mother

sometimes worked extra shifts at IBM. Sometimes she would work at least sixteen hours some days, so that I could get extra help in college. Sometimes when I was in school, I was out enjoying myself with friends, and sometimes I did not call my mom as much as I should have. This morning friends, may we praise the women in our lives that have and continue to do so much for us.

I also know, per our call to worship this morning that many of us have had many positive and influential women in our lives. Some folks maybe do not or did not have a good relationship with their biological mother, or some maybe do not or did not really know their biological mother. Today is about honoring mothers and all the women in our lives that have and maybe even continue to do so much for us. In fact, I would challenge us all after this service to put a picture of our mothers or another influential woman in our lives as our Facebook profile picture, to call a woman that influenced us to thank them. Or if they have gone on to glory, may we remember them. We even have small gifts for the women here today, so you will know that your church loves and values all you do for so many.

We remember that at the foot of Jesus's cross on Good Friday, his mother Mary was there, Mary Magdalene was there, and beloved disciple, or John was there. How great a mother's love, as I can only imagine the love that Mary had for Jesus. In fact, if anyone here has ever seen the movie "The Passion of the Christ" that came out twenty years ago in 2004, there is a scene in the movie where Jesus'

mother Mary has a flash back. In her mind she sees Jesus as a child, and in this scene, Jesus trips and falls. Mary drops everything and runs to her little boy. I have always imagined how hard Good Friday must have been for Mary. I mean she knew that her son was son was God in the flesh, she knew he was the Messiah, the savior of the world, yet she had to watch her son suffer and die.

(Slide 2 – Pastor Paul's Mother and Stepfather picture)

Since I picked on and embarrassed my mother last Sunday, I wanted to show you what she looks like. In this picture, I am standing between my stepfather Mike, and my mother Susan, who will be in church two weeks from today. This was in 2016, and on that day, I was commissioned as an Elder by Bishop Mark Webb, and then got ordained in 2018 by Bishop Mark Webb. My mother and stepfather were so excited, and to be honest I do not think I have ever had a bigger fan in my life than my mother. Melissa is a huge fan too!

In fact, my mother was so excited to send me a red ordination stole with the Global Methodist Church logo on it, so that I could process in for the ordination service when pastors were getting ordained at our recent Northeast Global Methodist Church Annual Conference. She sent it priority and wanted to make sure that I had it early. Before we moved here, my mom called and declared, "I talk to your stepfather, and we are sending you a check to help with moving costs." I said, mom you do not have to do this, and she said, "well I am!" That settled that! My

mother and stepfather also sent us an entire Home Depot moving kit with moving boxes, tape, shrink wrap, etc. Don't we all have great women in our lives? How many of your mothers are or were the same as far as their love and generosity?

Perhaps some of you feel the same as me on this day. If so, let us in word, deed, prayer, and memory, be thankful for the women in our lives. Make the phone calls, remember, honor, and let the world know the women that made us who we are today. I also remember for a number of years, my mother was a single mother, after her my father Ken got divorced. I remember she would work all day, and for a while she even attended night school to further her education. I remember seeing her at times struggle as a single mother.

According to some recent research I did for this sermon, of the single parent households in this country, about eight percent are headed by women (https://singlemotherguide.com/single-mother-statistics/). In fact, according to our recent nationwide census statistics in **"There were 37.9 million one-person households, 29% of all U.S. households in 2022"** (https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/americas-families-and-living-arrangements.html). That's a lot!

I tell you these statistics, because I remember what it was like to have a single mother, before she got remarried to my now stepfather. I wonder if anyone in our church has ever prayed or feels led by the Holy Spirit to support our single

parents in our midst, or in our community. Maybe some sort of small group could be created that would meet and support each other and better connect single parents. It could meet at this church, or in someone's home. I remember, as I said, being the child of a single parent, so how can we support single mothers and single fathers? We want to stand on the unchanging authority of the Bible, reach people for Christ, but sometimes when we meet people at their point of need, we can better minister to them and share the good news of Jesus Christ with them.

With this said, I am also excited that my beautiful wife Melissa is with us this morning. Also, Melissa loves the company "Thirty-One." How many people have heard of "Thirty-One?" Melissa has more "Thirty-One" bags than I can count, and I am not exaggerating. When I re-looked at the information about this company, the name of this company was derived from my main scripture this morning from Proverbs 31:10-31. I remember when I was in seminary, I told Melissa that I had re-read the book Proverbs in the Old Testament for a class, and that I realized that in the book of Proverbs that wisdom was always compared to women. Melissa said, "And this is a surprise how?"

In this scripture from Proverbs 31:10-31 we hear about the strength, influence, and dedication of so many women and mothers. Let us look at Proverbs 31:10-31 for this morning, in slides 3-7. The scripture says:

(Slides 3-7 – Proverbs 31:10-31)

How many of us here have never read the last chapter of the Book of Proverbs, or chapter 31? The subtitle from my NRSV Bible, from Proverbs 31:10-31 says, **"Ode to a Capable Wife"**. Now some women and mothers might hear this and say, well I can never be a woman or a mother like that, but in part Proverbs 31:10-31 is about honoring wives and mothers.

(Slide 8 – Ephesians 5:25-33)

In the Apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he tells us this in Ephesians 5:25-33:

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, 27 so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, 30 because we are members of his body.[a] 31 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' 32 This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. 33 Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband (Eph. 5:25-33, NRSV).

I remember very distinctly when I was little boy, my father Ken telling me that if I were ever mean or harmful to a girl or a woman that he would be very disappointed in me. Treating wives and mothers well is not an option, it is what God's word says. Life gets hard and stressful sometimes, and sometimes we can

lose sight of these things. Yet our wives, the women in our lives should be treated as great gifts from God.

(Slide 9 – Proverbs 23:22-25)

In Proverbs 23:22-25 it says:

22 Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old. 23 Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding. 24 The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who begets a wise son will be glad in him. 25 Let your father and mother be glad; let her who bore you rejoice (Proverbs 23:22-25, NRSV).

The last verse of the scripture is displayed on slide 9, with a beautiful background. Again, I understand that some did not have a good relationship with their father and mother. Even still, if we did, scriptures like this exist tell us how to treat each other. In this case how to treat our fathers and mothers. It might sound weird for me to ask this question, but are your mother and father glad that you were born? I hope so. Are we grateful that our mothers gave birth to us?

Our last slide for this morning is one my favorite scriptures from Psalm 139:13.

(Slide 10 – Psalm 139:13)

Psalm 139:13 says:

13 For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb (Ps. 139:13, NRSV).

I love this scripture, as it tells us that baby is knit together in her mother's womb. It is a beautiful scripture that tells us of the love of a mother for her child, and intimacy of a mother carrying her child.

I want to tell one of my favorite stories about a mother's love for her child. This story is called, "It wasn't your baby," and I have told this story in many churches. Here it is:

There were two warring tribes in the Andes, one lived in the valley and the other high in the mountains. One night, the mountain people invaded the lowlanders. As part of their plundering of the people, they kidnapped a baby of one of the families. The valley tribe did not know how to climb the mountain. They did not know any of the trails that the mountain people used. They did not know where to find the mountain people or how to track them in the steep terrain. Even so, they sent their best party of fighting men to climb to the top and bring the baby home. The men tried one method of climbing the rocks and then another. They tried one dead end trail and then another. After several days of efforts, they managed to have very little progress. Feeling hopeless and helpless, the men decided that the cause was lost, and they prepared to return. As they were packing their gear for the descent, they saw the baby's mother walking towards them. They realized that she was coming down the same mountain face they failed to climb. And then they saw that she had the baby strapped to her back. How could that be? One man greeted her and said, "We could not climb the mountain. How did you do this when we, the strongest and the most able men in the village, couldn't do it?" She shrugged her shoulder and said, "It wasn't your baby" (https://www.gofastdontdie.com/blogs/news/it-wasnt-your-baby-on-any-sundays).

Today brothers and sisters, on this Mother's Day, let us honor all the women that helped shape us, who sacrifice and sacrificed for us, and who helped to make us who are today. Happy Mother's Day, and God bless! Amen.