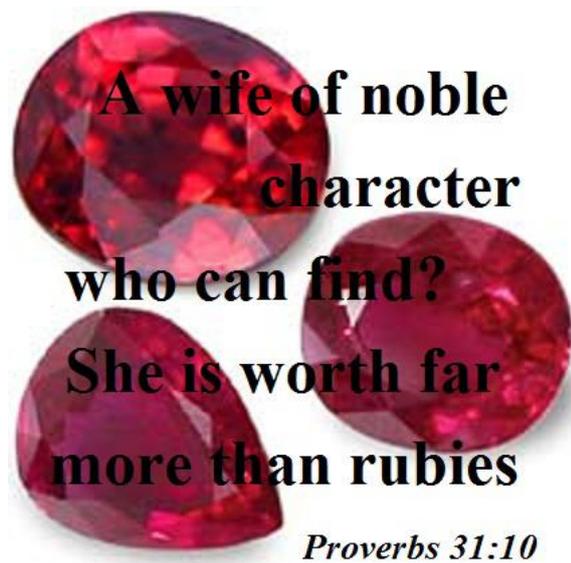


**A Noble Character**

**Miriam West 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

**Proverbs 31 v 8-31**

**Today is Mothering Sunday**



Mothering Sunday is the fourth Sunday of Lent . Although it's often called Mothers' Day it has no connection with the American festival of that name.

Traditionally, it was a day when young people , mainly daughters, who had gone to work as domestic servants 'in service' were given a day off to visit their mother and family.

As they walked home along the country lanes, they would pick wild flowers or violets to take to church or give to their mother as a small gift.

We are not all Mothers, but we all had a Mother! And I hope you have happy memories of her and she was a positive influence on your life.

There will be someone in your life who you have looked up and tried to follow their example. This may have been your Mother or Father, but could a another family member or a trusted friend

Today's reading tells of a lady who is described as a 'noble character'.

**Proverbs 31:10**

**A wife of noble character who can find?  
She is worth far more than rubies**

LThis lady is an example to us all. We shall look at her example to see what we can learn today

We will start towards the end of the reading:

**<sup>30</sup> Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;  
but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.**

**She has Faith In the Lord**

I always think this is one lady I'd like to meet, she sounds amazing. A busy businesswoman and mother, juggling home and work life! She sounds very much like many people today. But the most important thing about her is left to last, not her beauty, not her charm, BUT she feared the Lord.

The term feared the Lord doesn't mean afraid, like who's afraid of the big bad wolf! No it means she trusted and believed God, and wanted to do all in her power to follow him and do his will.

Another couple of ladies who feared the Lord and trusted him were Naomi and Ruth and I think the words of Ruth to Naomi shows someone who had great faith in God. The words of the song 'I

will follow you', which we sang earlier, very much reflect Ruth's word to Naomi, confirming her faith in the Lord.

### **Ruth 1:16-18**

**<sup>16</sup> But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. <sup>17</sup> Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me."**

When we look at these ladies, do we have Faith in the Lord like that!

### **A noble character has Faith in the Lord**

#### **She's faithful friend to all**

Look how **Proverbs 31** describes this noble character:

**<sup>15</sup> She gets up while it is still night;  
she provides food for her family  
and portions for her female servants**

**<sup>20</sup> She opens her arms to the poor  
and extends her hands to the needy.**

There's a lovely description in the passage of how she provides for the family, her servants and those in need!

In the Bible there are a number of ladies who helped and supported others in different ways.

#### **Shunammite woman and Elisha**

2 Kings 4 V 9-10

**She said to her husband, "I know that this man who often comes our way is a holy man of God. <sup>10</sup> Let's make a small room on the roof and put in it a bed and a table, a chair and a lamp for him. Then he can stay there whenever he comes to us."**

The Shunammite woman showed friendship to the prophet **Elisha**, constructing a room where he could stay whenever he was in the town. She provided hospitality, providing just what he needed.

#### **Jesus and his disciples had a group of women who supported him**

Luke 8 v 1-3

**After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, <sup>2</sup> and also ...Mary (called Magdalene)... <sup>3</sup> Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.**

A group of ladies who supported Jesus, we don't know exactly who they were, but like the disciples, they came from different backgrounds! But they cared for Jesus and his disciples. We all need people who support us in whatever way we need.

## Dorcas

Acts 9 v 36-39

<sup>36</sup> In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. <sup>37</sup> About that time she became sick and died, <sup>38</sup> Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!"

<sup>39</sup> Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.

Dorcas was to be well loved, she was a busy lady making clothes for those in need.

Providing for those in need in a practical way. Although it may seem a sad story, Peter restored her back to life, to continue her work among the church.

These ladies who were faithful friends to different people, providing what was needed. In different circumstances, in different ways. They were Noble characters

### Noble character is a faithful friend to all

#### She fights for justice

<sup>8</sup> **Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,  
for the rights of all who are destitute.**

<sup>9</sup> **Speak up and judge fairly;  
defend the rights of the poor and needy**

Our noble character is encouraged to speak up for justice, there are so many people in our world who need people to stand up for them.

While preparing for this morning I came across a story from the book of Numbers:

**27 The daughters of Zelophehad son of Hopher, belonged to the clans of Manasseh son of Joseph. The names of the daughters were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milkah and Tirzah. They came forward <sup>2</sup> and stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the leaders and the whole assembly at the entrance to the tent of meeting and said, <sup>3</sup> "Our father died in the wilderness. He was not among Korah's followers, who banded together against the Lord, but he died for his own sin and left no sons. <sup>4</sup> Why should our father's name disappear from his clan because he had no son? Give us property among our father's relatives."**

<sup>5</sup> **So Moses brought their case before the Lord, <sup>6</sup> and the Lord said to him, <sup>7</sup> "What Zelophehad's daughters are saying is right. You must certainly give them property as an inheritance among their father's relatives and give their father's inheritance to them.**

This story reminded me of the Jane Austen story 'Pride and Prejudice'. Five sisters who had no inheritance because they didn't have a brother and the inheritance went to male relatives!

But these five sisters stood up for justice, in what was a male dominated society. They received justice and were given their inheritance

We saw on the news recently of a Catholic nun in Myanmar who stood up for justice as she stood in front of armed police. Sister Ann Roza put herself in danger as she tried to stop police using violence against protesters in Myanmar. She did this not only once but on two occasions.

To quote her!

"I was running towards where they were beating the protesters. It was happening in front of this clinic. It was like a war," she said. "I thought it would be better that I die instead of lots of people."

A noble character who is a great example of the words from Proverbs 31 v 8-9:

**<sup>8</sup> Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,  
for the rights of all who are destitute.**

**<sup>9</sup> Speak up and judge fairly;  
defend the rights of the poor and needy**

### **A Noble character fights for justice**

We need to look at these examples of noble characters and ask ourselves: Do we have **Faith in the Lord**, are a **Faithful Friend to those in need** and do we **Fight for Justice**?

As we think of our all Mums today let us give thanks to God for them and for all who are examples of noble characters. May God give us the wisdom and strength to follow their example.

We now close with the hymn 'Beauty for Brokenness' and reflect on the images as well as the words.

<https://youtu.be/3kVHKuldZyw>

### **A blessing for Mothering Sunday**

May the Lord who brought us to birth by his Spirit,  
strengthen us for the Christian life.

May the Lord who provides for all our needs  
sustain us day by day.

May the Lord whose steadfast love is constant as a mother's care,  
send us out to live and work for others.

And the blessing of God Almighty.  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be with you and remain with you always. Amen

Beauty for brokenness  
Hope for despair  
Lord, in your suffering  
This is our prayer  
Bread for the children  
Justice, joy, peace  
Sunrise to sunset  
Your kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives  
Cures for their ills  
Work for the craftsman  
Trade for their skills  
Land for the dispossessed  
Rights for the weak  
Voices to plead the cause  
Of those who can't speak

Friend of the weak  
Give us compassion we pray  
Melt our cold hearts  
Let tears fall like rain  
Come, change our love  
From a spark to a flame

Refuge from cruel wars  
Havens from fear  
Cities for sanctuary  
Freedoms to share  
Peace to the killing-fields  
Scorched earth to green  
Christ for the bitterness  
His cross for the pain

Friend of the weak  
Give us compassion we pray  
Melt our cold hearts  
Let tears fall like rain  
Come, change our love  
From a spark to a flame

Rest for the ravaged earth  
Oceans and streams  
Plundered and poisoned  
Our future, our dreams  
Lord, end our madness  
Carelessness, greed  
Make us content with  
The things that we need

Friend of the weak  
Give us compassion we pray  
Melt our cold hearts  
Let tears fall like rain  
Come, change our love  
From a spark to a flame

Lighten our darkness  
Breathe on this flame  
Until your justice  
Burns brightly again  
Until the nations  
Learn of your ways  
Seek your salvation  
And bring you their praise

Friend of the weak  
Give us compassion we pray  
Melt our cold hearts  
Let tears fall like rain  
Come, change our love  
From a spark to a flame