

UHPC WORSHIP—MOTHER’S DAY, MAY 12, 2019

SERMON TOPIC: “WOMEN OF GOOD DEEDS WORSHIPPING GOD”

I offer the following two Scriptures for our reflection and meditation on this day when we are celebrating mothers and women of the church:

Psalm 139: 13-14 “*...It was You who formed my inward parts; You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise You for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works, that I know very well. “*

Psalm 71: 5-6: “*For You, O LORD, are my hope, my trust O LORD, from my youth. Upon you I have leaned from my birth. It was You who took me from my mother’s womb. My praise is continually of You.”*

It is that time of year once more when the church pauses to celebrate women of the church and motherhood at all levels in general. We pause to reflect on the value and purpose of all women who worship and serve God in various ways. I sometimes like to ask myself and others this question: “WHAT WOULD THE WORLD BE LIKE WITHOUT GIRLS, MOTHERS, WIVES, AUNTS, GRAND-MOTHERS, AND FEMALE FRIENDS? Someone once said that the hand that rocks the cradle rocks the world. It is important that we take time to recognize the worth and value of women in the church and in the world, for too often the service and value of women are overlooked, ignored, considered worthless, or taken for granted. But Proverbs 31 tells us that: “**A capable wife, who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.**” Solomon continues to sing her praises showing that she is industrious, kind, diligent, faithful, hard-working, strong, dignified, wise; her children and husband call her blessed saying that many women do well, but she

surpasses them all. Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, BUT A WOMAN WHO FEARS THE LORD IS TO BE PRAISED. ...Let her receive an inheritance and let her works praise her in the gates or in the community. (paraphrased)

Most of us can identify someone in our lives who may have these qualities. I am sure that many of us know about some other biblical woman who stands out in our minds such as Mary-the Virgin to whom the angel Gabriel said: *"...Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God and now you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son. (Luke 1: 30-31--NRSV) -- Sarah-mother of Isaac of whom the LORD spoke to Abraham saying: "I will bless her indeed, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she shall give rise to nations and rulers of peoples shall issue from her." (Gen. 17:15-16- Hebr. Tanakh) --Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus the Christ. To her the LORD said: "He will turn many of the people of Israel to the LORD their God." (Luke 1: 16- NRSV) Not to mention Ruth- mother of Obed leading up to the lineage of Christ and Lydia-a merchant who received the Gospel and had her household saved and baptized. We may also want to consider the women who remained at the Cross of Jesus during His suffering and crucifixion. Except for John, all the other disciples fled. It was also the women who returned to the tomb on Resurrection Morning and discovered that His body was not there. It was to these women that the angel revealed that Christ was risen. It was to Mary Magdalene that Jesus appeared like a gardener and told her to go and tell his disciples and Peter that He was alive and to meet Him at the Sea of Galilee. But still today, women are said to be incapable and unacceptable to serve at the higher level of the ministry of God in Christ Jesus in the world. Despite what Paul wrote, it is not what Jesus said or demonstrated when He spoke to the woman of Samaria, to Martha and Mary- her sister, or to the woman who was accused of adultery without a male brought to justice with her. JESUS included women and he blessed them. He counted them valuable, honorable, and worthy to be accepted in the work of the Kingdom.*

I hasten to say that the men are no less valuable in the scheme of life and in the plan of Salvation. So, consider this: "NO WOMAN EXISTS WITHOUT A MAN INVOLVED AS A FATHER. AND NO MAN EXISTS WITHOUT A MOTHER INVOLVED. So, **it takes two to make and to sustain**

life and none is more valuable than the other in the eyes of God!!! However, at the same time, it is the female who carries the baby in the womb for nine months and gives birth through great pain and suffering in order to bring this joy to life into the world. So, what am I saying? It is this: We need one another. So why not love, respect, and value one another, cherish each other and be a blessing to one another?

Now let us look at the text today in Acts 9: 36-43 which tells us about a Deacon by the name of Dorcas. **The Bible tells us that she was a woman of good works.** It happened that she passed away and all the widows in the community were grieved and distressed because while she was alive, she helped them in many ways, but especially in making clothing for them. Many of them brought some of the beautiful clothing she made for them to show as they grieved her loss. We were not told that she had any children, but we know that she was a kind, generous, and industrious woman of God. **She was like a mother to them.** When she died, Peter was in Lydda a town nearby Joppa. The believers sent for him to help them in their grief and distress. When Peter arrived, and saw their sorrow, he turned to the body of Dorcas and **took her by the hand saying “Dorcas, arise!” And he raised her up alive.** The news of this great miracle went abroad, and many came to faith because of it. **THE BIBLE TELLS US THAT: SHE WAS A WOMAN FULL OF GOOD WORKS.**

I noticed also a special theme flowing through the **23rd Psalm, and John Chapter 10.** It is that of A SHEPHERD. I began to contemplate what this has to do with Dorcas and other women in the Bible who were people of GOOD DEEDS. We don't often associate women with the task of shepherding. However, as I reflected I began to see that **good shepherds have some of the same qualities that mothers and women in general have, such as: Women and mothers tend to be comforters, healers, protectors of their young, providers even with milk from their very bodies, caring, concerned, loving, kind, and full of compassion.** It is the unusual woman who lacks these qualities. **SO, WE CAN CONCLUDE THAT WOMEN/ MOTHERS ARE IN A SENSE GOOD SHEPHERDS AND DOERS OF GOOD DEEDS FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE** for they tend to naturally possess some basic godly characteristics. According to Jesus, our ultimate GOOD SHEPHERD, the shepherd knows the sheep and the sheep knows the voice of the Shepherd just like a mother knows the voice of her child. Sheep follow their shepherd as children will follow their

mothers. The Psalmist declares: The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want... He comforts me... leads me by still waters, restores my soul. He will cause goodness and mercy to follow me all my days and cause me to dwell in the house of the LORD forever. These same qualities are in the character of mothers and most women. But they are often taken for granted by the larger society. Yet they are so critical for giving and for sustaining life and the well-being of the human spirit.

WOMEN AND MOTHERS OF GOOD DEEDS ARE USUALLY WORSHIPPERS OF GOD. We find in Acts 16: a woman by the name of Lydia. She was an entrepreneur—a merchant, a business woman, and a mother. The text tells us that she was also a worshipper of God who traded in purple cloth. She was from Thiatira. On the Sabbath Day, Paul went out by a certain place in the area where she was. It was a place known to be a place of prayer. Many women were gathered there. The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit opened her heart to receive the Gospel as it was preached by Paul. She accepted Christ and got her entire household to believe and to be baptized. Then she extended hospitality by inviting the disciples to come to her home and be refreshed. How gracious of her!

We conclude with the awesome and powerful worship of the Lamb in heaven. (Rev. 7: 9-17) It included people of every tribe, every nation, every color, every gender, and every creed. So there were some women in the mix—worshipping God. For God is no respecter of persons. They were all standing before the Throne of God singing and waving palm branches, a sign of victory, and they were saying: **“Salvation belongs to God...”** All the angels, twenty-four elders, and the four living creatures fell to the ground and worshipped God saying: AMEN! BLESSINGS, AND GLORY, AND HONOR, AND STRENGTH, AND POWER, AND MIGHT BE TO OUR GOD FOREVER! WE THE WOMEN AND MOTHERS JOIN WITH THAT HEAVENLY HOST IN WORSHIP OF OUR GOD, and we say the same thing.

I know that no one is perfect, but when it comes to having the qualities of a Shepherd, which is one of the names God calls God's self, women come very close. **Sometimes they are even considered foolish, because of their compassion, mercy, caring, loving, patient, protective, providing, and committed, dedicated, ways.** SO, MOTHERS AND ALL WOMEN WHO WORSHIP

GOD AND WHO ARE DOERS OF GOOD DEEDS, PLEASE KNOW THIS DAY THAT GOD MADE YOU THAT WAY. GOD'S CHARACTER IS IN YOU. It is good that you have these qualities. God made it so for His own purpose, for the children, and for the world to be a better and more habitable place. You deserve to be appreciated, loved, and respected.

KNOW THAT GOD LOVES YOU IN A VERY SPECIAL WAY. YOU ARE NO LESS VALUABLE THAN ANYONE ELSE. YOU ARE TO BE PRAISED FOR WHO YOU ARE, FOR WHAT YOU DO, AND FOR WHOM YOU WORSHIP AND ADORE. SO, **GO** IN THE BLESSINGS OF JEHOVAH GOD. **GO** KNOWING HOW JESUS CARED FOR AND LOVED HIS OWN MOTHER, AND THAT IN HIS DARKEST HOUR, HE LOOKED DOWN FROM THE CROSS AND TOLD JOHN: "Son behold your MOTHER! - AND SAID TO HER: "MOTHER BEHOLD YOUR SON!" I encourage us today to **entrust our mothers back to Jesus for His loving care and tender mercies.** (Those whose mothers are alive.) For He is able to do a much better job than we can. At the same time however, we should do our very best to honor our mothers, the women in our church, and all the other females in our lives. I also encourage women of the church and mothers in general to carry themselves in a dignified and respectable way that will cause others to honor and respect you. LET US ALL CONSIDER THIS: "IF MOTHERS AND WOMEN WERE NOT HERE, HOW WOULD IT BE FOR US, FOR THE CHURCHES, AND FOR THE WORLD AT LARGE? MAY WE AS WOMEN DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN OUR SELF-RESPECT, OUR LOVE FOR OUR GOD, OUR DIGNITY, COMMITMENT, AND LOVE, AS WE CONTINUE TO DO GOOD DEEDS WORSHIPPING, PRAYING, AND SERVING GOD THE FATHER THROUGH THE SON, THE LAMB UPON THE THRONE WHO IS WORTHY OF ALL GLORY, HONOR, AND PRAISE.

AMEN!

Rev. Brenda R. Berry/ Pastor-Moderator

Univ. Hts. Presby. Chr.