

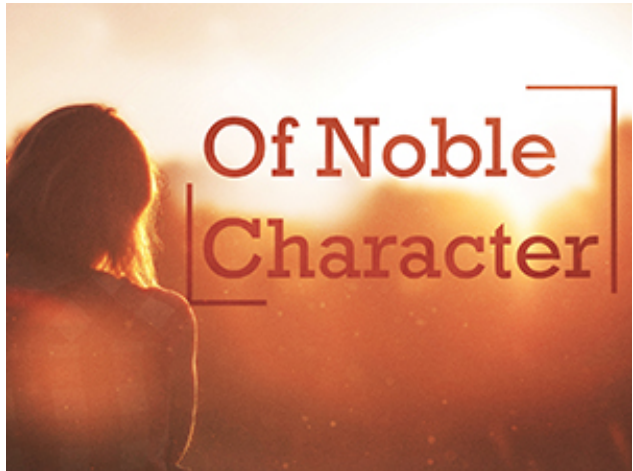
OF NOBLE CHARACTER

Sermon for Maureen Drummond's Funeral Service

28th June 2017

Reading: Proverbs 31:10-31

The book of Proverbs book is full of pithy one liners and wisdom to live by. How fitting it is then for the book to finish with a woman who puts it into practice. It's like the author's saying, "If you're wondering what it is to live a life of wisdom, to put these proverbs in action, then look at this wife of noble character".



And it's no surprise Grahame chose this passage for today. For in many ways Maureen was a "wife of noble character". And not only does this mean Graham had full confidence in Maureen (vs11), and because of Maureen he lacked nothing of value (vs 11). Not only does it mean she brought him good, not harm all their days together (vs 12) but she was also wonderful a mother, a nurturer, competent in the work place and cared for those less fortunate.

And as I was pondering this description I was reminded of what Grahame and the boys had told me a few days back. About when the boys had left home Maureen went back University to study for her MA. And how, part way through her studies Grahame received a call to Whangarei. But how was she to complete her Masters? Well, she certainly didn't "eat the bread of idleness" (vs 27). She structured her papers around the bus timetable and "her lamp did not go out at night" (vs 27). Not that anyone would know. No fuss, no drawing attention to herself. Upon graduation she got a job in the Whangarei court where like the wife of noble character she acquitted herself in the workplace.

Yes, for this reason and many others, this passage has Maureen's name written all over it. But it also has a word for us - a word of encouragement as we grieve our loss and miss Maureen dearly. How you might ask? Well, both Maureen and this passage act as a signpost pointing us to a better things. How is this? Turning back to verses 29&30

Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all." Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Proverbs 31:29-30

For you see, Maureen was a wife of noble character not due to strong moral fibre, her upbringing. Nor because Grahame was an awesome husband or the boys model children. At her core was her faith - a faith consisting of a personal relationship with God mixed with respect and awe. Verse 25

She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come.
Proverbs 31:25

Why? Because of her walk with God. So in this way Maureen acts as a signpost pointing us to a better way. We also can walk with God.

But in a deeper way this passage points to better things. A wife of noble character is only a part. For there's more to wisdom than we read here. This is not wisdom's full expression. For this passage points to the wisdom of God who took on flesh, becoming human. It points to Jesus who is the full expression of wisdom.

And time does not allow me to show how Jesus was like a wife of noble character but better in every way. But for our comfort and encouragement I'll choose just one quality, - that of nurturer. For Jesus, the wisdom of God, was a nurture just like the wife of noble character. Of Jerusalem, God's city who'd lost their way Jesus said...

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings... Matthew 23:37

And so like a mother hen who when sensing danger scoops her young under her wings so Jesus is towards you and I. As a mother hen will protect her chicks even at great risk so did Christ

Let me illustrate with a story... One night a farmer was awakened by an explosion from his barn. Scrambling out of bed he raced outside to see a raging fire taking hold of his barn. By dawn the fire had burnt itself out and he began sifting through the ashes. There he came across a hen, black and charred and lifeless. The farmer kicked over the still smouldering hen and to his surprise out from under her came five little chicks. They were saved because the mother hen had protected them from the fire. She had gathered them under her wings.

And in this we see Jesus. For like the mother hen, he sees our danger and longs to gather us under his wings even at great cost. And it did cost. For sin and death are a constant danger - no matter how we try and push them aside. And only Jesus can protect us, and for this he had to die. You see, like the mother hen Jesus died that we might live. If you want to understand the cross then look no further than that mother hen. She died to save those she loved. Likewise, Jesus died to save those he loved. Yet, amazingly, unlike the hen Jesus did not stay dead. There was no blackened, charred body for Satan to kick over on that first Good Friday. No! Not at

all! For having given his life, having saved us by way of the cross, God raised Jesus from the dead. And because he lives those who believe him, receiving him as Lord, have eternal life. Those who reject Jesus face sin and death alone but to all who receive him the promise of eternal life. Eternal life in part this side of eternity and eternal life in all fullness in the next. This is the Good News Maureen embraced and now points us too. As a wife, a woman, of noble character, who knew what it was to have God at her centre her example and her life point us to the same invitation.
Amen