

Wisdom

Proverbs 31: 10-31 James 3: 13-18 Pastor Lentz
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The title of this sermon really should be “Wise Women and the amazing things they did, and the men who appreciated them. “ You see there are people who claim the woman in Proverbs is a myth that people really can’t do all that she did. I not only didn’t believe the woman was real but I personally know women who would remind you of the woman in Proverbs. However, I don’t want to simply talk about them, because they are still alive, and may not appreciate my calling them out like that. However, I wanted to show some different examples of people who I know qualify, so that as I tell about them you can think of women who you know who have also done amazing things perhaps that are not quite as dramatic, but equally amazing. So I went on a quest and I didn’t have to search very far to find examples of women of great faith. The truth is that many of you could talk about your mother’s in ways that would demonstrate how she was an unsung hero. Actually, many of you could be written about but you are way too humble to allow it so at least some of you have spoken about the amazing things that your mother’s have done has just overwhelmed me with how great some of them were.

I wanted to tell you about a few women I looked up so that I wouldn’t be just talking about your mother’s but of women that many people could identify with and that many people recognize as incredible people. That way hopefully all of you can recognize your mother’s somewhere in the mix. The truth is that I found so many positive women that I had to pick to be able to speak about them. The amazing things many of the women did were almost unbelievable just like the women in proverbs. They are merely representative of the women I

found. They are people whose lives and actions deserve more recognition.

Catherine Booth was born in 1829. She was attracted to and married a clergyman because of how bright she found him and his sermons. She was an asset to him the rest of his life. She was clearly a woman similar to the woman written about in Proverbs. She raised 8 children, including one with extreme disabilities. And if that didn't keep her busy, in her spare time she was an intellectual who wrote advocating the things she believed in. She was convincing, influential and powerful. She influenced people who read her work and made an impact.

She and her husband started the Christian Mission that was both successful and criticized heavily. Many nights her husband would come home with eggs, mud, and other substances on him because people had thrown stuff on him. They later changed the name because of what Catherine said. She wanted a new start, a new name that was something didn't have any negative baggage coming along for the ride.

They started their mission because Christian Churches refused to help the poor. Her idea was that missionary work should be with the people near where you already were. She believed missionary work needed to be practical and you may have heard of the name she gave the mission. The new Christian Mission was called The Salvation Army. I could write much more about her because she was an amazing woman whose husband was blessed by her all his life.

This next woman and her husband were also amazing. Like Catherine Booth what she was advocating was so radical and ahead of her time that her stance did cause them difficulty. Her husband however was proud of her and stood by her. The truth is that Ann caused her husband, herself and many others a great deal of difficulty because she was willing to say what she believed, even if it disagreed with what the

powers that be were saying at the time. She stood up for what she believed in and for what she saw that was right. She had a profound sense of right and wrong. It didn't matter who was hurt by her pointing out what she saw that was right.

Ann Hutchinson was born in 1591 in England and immigrated to the American colony with her husband for religious reasons. She was greatly influenced by the famous preacher Joseph Cotton, even if he didn't really go far enough for her taste. Cotton even distanced himself from her because of her radical beliefs. You may not know that Joseph Cotton was widely known as one radically harsh preacher, and he was very popular. One of his sermons I believe was "A Sinner in the Hands of an Angry God." He was very harsh and he wasn't going far enough as far as she was concerned. She was a woman who knew what she thought and was willing to tell you even if you were famous. Cotton was famous and he distanced himself from her, because he didn't agree with her.

Ann Hutchinson was even called an American Jezebel by the Governor of the Masseur Bay Colony because of her strong beliefs that differed from those around her. Like everyone else she and her husband left England because of their religious beliefs and they became puritans, in the American Colony. You could say they were radical even among radicals. However, she had such wild and heretical beliefs that she believed it was wrong to enslave the Indians. That is right that is one of the major beliefs that she held that got her into trouble. In fact, she even challenged the clergy because she believed that God revealed God's self to every believer. Those were her radical beliefs that people were so up in arms about. Sounds ridiculous to be against what she said, doesn't it.

Because she led Biblical topics for women where 60 or so women gathered and appreciated her ideas, she was a threat to the

establishment. She wasn't willing to simply go along with things. She was willing to say such revolutionary and heretical things as that God had revealed to her that mistreating the Indians was wrong, and that Clergy were not needed for people to find salvation. So she and her husband were banished from the Colony. One the one hand it is difficult to think of people being that narrow minded but then on the other hand.....

Now Ann wasn't the typical person that Proverbs spoke about but she qualified in my mind because she was more like a prophet and true to what she believed and so far ahead of her time. You could compare her to Debra, Ruth, or Susan, for her courage. Obviously, she was respected by her husband and he believed in her. From my perspective she is like the woman in Proverbs because she was willing to be a leader and to speak her truth. Today of course her truths are things that we take for granted. At that time people disagreed with her and didn't like the unsettling things that she said.

I imagine that a man married to her had to also be very brave and courageous because he was going to be subjected to the same type of discrimination, maybe even worse because some people would have been disrespectful that he was married to a woman who spoke so radically. I believe that he could be very proud of her thinking and her courage. In fact, I suspect her husband was proud of her and believed in her. His actions suggest that in fact, his actions suggest that he must have believed in her a lot.

Irena Sendler was born in 1910. She lived in Poland and has had books and a movie made about her life. The movie is " A Courageous Heart" what I saw of it was really well done, historically accurate and believable. Irena was a nurse, and social worker but she also worked in the Polish Underground in German-occupied Warsaw. She was even the head of the children's section of the underground. In addition to being

in on planning and missions, she personally smuggled children out of the Warsaw Ghetto and is credited with saving over 2500. She saved more than anyone else except for a few diplomats who wrote visas.

The way Irena smuggled children out was by becoming a plumber herself. She went into the Ghetto to fix plumbing problems, and under her tarp in the back of her truck she smuggled children out of the Ghetto. She thought of almost everything because she would teach the Jewish Children Christian Bible verses and songs so they could pass for Christian if questioned. She even trained dogs to be vicious sounding if Nazi guards looked too closely at the truck.

Eventually she was found out and tortured because the Nazi's wanted to know who she was working with. She didn't tell and so they broke both legs. She still refused to tell. They sentenced her to death and were going to kill her in a firing squad when some of the resistance members bribed some guards and helped her escaped.

The men in her life believed in her in fact, many people believed in her and have since shown that belief in clear ways. After the war the State of Israel recognized her with the Righteous among Nations award, and Poland awarded her the Order of the White Eagle, which is Poland's highest honor. She was a nominee in 2008 for the Nobel prize but some guy won it for a movie about climate change. She died soon after.

I hope that discussing the things that these women have done you have been encouraged to think of things that other women have done that you know. We both know that you know amazing women. You know amazing women who kept families together in spite of how difficult it was. You may know of mothers who worked two jobs just to make sure her children had what she believed they needed. You know of women who were beacons of faith, of courage, and of innovation whether they

allow themselves to be seen in that positive light. Many of the most amazing women I know are also very humble and that makes them even more spectacular as far as I am concerned. They have led quiet lives and have done and faced very difficult situations, that required amazing courage, determination and perseverance. To me sometimes that takes more courage than the big things because it is so every day, and ongoing. Many of you have done and are doing things that are like that, every day. It is my prayer that you let yourself realize a little bit more of just how amazing you and the people are around you. Amen