

SERMON THOUGHTS ABRIDGED

ISAIAH 69:12-13

THE LORD COMFORTS AS MOTHER

For thus says the LORD:

*"Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river,
And the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream.
Then you shall feed;
On her sides shall you be carried,
And be dandled on her knees.
As one whom his mother comforts,
So I will comfort you;
And you shall be comforted in Jerusalem."*

Just as sure as the Bible declares God in heaven to be our Father and refers to Him with masculine pronouns, so also the Bible at times describes Him using the picture of the love and the heart of a mother. We have one such example before us today.

This text is from Isaiah. The prophet Isaiah speaks from the Lord regarding God's wrath against His sinful, stubborn, and unfaithful people. Isaiah announces to the Old Testament nation of Judah its future captivity, exile, and banishment in Babylon. Isaiah, however, also announces to them in their dire need, the rescue and deliverance that God has in store for them, freeing them and leading them back to their homeland and to Jerusalem, their city of glory. Isaiah, in the big picture, is describing the Lord's wrath against all sinners, each of us included, and His rescue for sinners, each of us included, through His Special Rescuer, the eternal Son of God, Christ Jesus our Savior. As surely as the Lord condemns you for every act of defiance and disobedience against Him—do you waste the talents and opportunities He has given you? Do you have your own agenda and priorities in life that don't necessarily follow His lead and His will but your own? Do you let your pride dictate your actions and words contrary to what the Lord says?—I want, I feel, I think; and that's what I'm going to do because it suits me? Just as surely as Isaiah condemns you for your sin, not Isaiah but the Lord, so also Isaiah offers the sweet comfort of God's forgiving love in which He paid the life of His own Son to set you free.

And so Isaiah writes, in the Lord's name, *"Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river.* Speaking of His Old Testament people returning to their beloved city Jerusalem, the Lord says He will give them peace. A river brings water from upstream, it's not something for which any human being can take credit. The Lord built it with its wide range of tributaries, creeks, streams and lakes that feed into it. A flowing river is a great gift. Peace is a great gift, peace with God above. It's the peace that passes all understanding, peace effected by the crucifixion of Jesus' atonement for our sins. And then through that peace with God, peace flows out to one another in our day to day hearts and lives. A river keeps on flowing, bringing ton after ton of water, more water than can be used. God's peace and forgiveness in Jesus, more than you need, just keeps on coming day after day. You can count on it.

"Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream. No longer would the Gentile nations, the non-Jewish peoples, oppress His people any more. These Gentile nations would bring glory to God's people, not take glory from them. In the same way the Lord in heaven sees to it that you, His children through Christ, are actually served by every force against you. God twists and turns Satan's plots against you, to serve you, to build you up and lead you to lean on Christ and your Father and the Counselor Spirit ever more.

You the believer are described as a child richly and lovingly cared for by mother. *Then you shall feed, and be dandled on her knees.* Fed and nourished. Whether a nursing babe, or young child, or young adult, or grown child, fed and nourished by mother carefully preparing food for her brood. What a gift that is, God gives you your daily bread through the labors and love of your mother. Children, do you appreciate your mothers efforts to feed you? Or do you just expect her to do it, because it's her job, she's your servant? Do you thank her for the hours and energy spent feeding you? Or do you complain about your food that mother provides for you? She's not your servant, you know. You are not her boss. She is God's gift to you. Cherish her, love her, respect her, and help her. If she is loving enough to prepare the food for you, are you loving enough to clear the table and clean the dishes for her, without whining? Just as you thank the Lord for your forgiveness and daily bread and daily life in Jesus, so thank your mom.

On her sides shall you be carried. Little children like to be with mom, to be held, to be carried, to be in her presence. How is it that little ones, when they are restless or hurt, re-act with such peace when they are finally passed to mom? Children who are too big to carry, still long for mom's approval and assurance of her love. Mom, although it is your responsibility to teach and to train your children, do not take the joy out of their lives and grind them into the ground with belittling criticism and unrealistic expectations that do not match their level in life. It is true, God condemns us, whether we are parent or child, and expects the impossible from us. But God has sent His Son Jesus to bring us forgiveness and to bring us close to His side. Let your children be at your side.

You shall *be dandled on her knees*. Who has more fun when bouncing a little one on the knee?—the child or mom? Both! What a joy for children to know that mom likes to play with them and make them happy! What a joy for mom to see and hear her little ones smile and laugh with glee! To those of you who are older, in order for busy mom to take time with you, you also need to take time for her. She enjoys your help with all her labors, whether its help with cleaning, or doing meals, or just picking up your own stuff! Listen to her, obey her, honor her. The commandment says Honor your father and mother, not just obey them. Honor them. Stop feeling as if you're being infringed upon when asked or ordered to help. Stop ignoring your mother's orders or wishes. Stop thinking, It's just mom, so I can slip by—she won't do anything. How much joy does that lead to, between mothers and children? Does that lead to "*you shall be dandled on her knees*"? The Lord provides for our eternal joy and happiness through the rescue in His Son. Work together with your mother on earth to bring joy and happiness to your home on this earth.

As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. The Lord indeed comforts his people with daily love for flowing tears, with encouragement in His Son for those defeated by life yet another day, with the assurance of forgiveness and new life in Christ for all convicted of sin by His Word and condemnation. He comforts with the promise of heaven, those drawing near to death's portal. The heavenly Jerusalem awaits! Treasure His heart and His love for you. Treasure also the comfort and love that He has built into your mother's heart for you.

As far as I can tell (!) being a mother is a lot different from being a father. Father's command more respect, don't they? It's easy to disrespect mother. Children, do you realize when you disobey and dishonor your mother, you're also disrespecting your father! In God, the two are one. By God's design, your mother is the most precious earthly gift your father has. Honor her. Fathers, remember to back-up Mom. It's a wonderful lift for your wife, when you step in and let little Johnny and Susie know that their love and cooperation with mom is expected from you and very important to you.

Mothers serve in the background, don't they? Yet their hearts are filled with so much love and emotion! For whom is it harder to say good-bye, when a child leaves home, for father or mother? Whose heart always reaches out to an erring child, father or mother? Nevertheless, who is it that often stands into the background? Mother. Have you noticed the write-ups in the Dakota Herald for each of the high school seniors? (I will grant that I have not seen them all.) When the question is asked, Who is your hero? isn't it interesting that of the various names mentioned, I have not seen "mother."

The most crucial role between mother and child, the most crucial comfort that she can offer is the Gospel—the Good News of God's love and forgiveness in Jesus. Moms, you may not be able to provide many other things in life, but if you provide the Gospel of Jesus, you have covered the best aspect of training your son or daughter. The other way around: Moms, you can provide many things, opportunities, freedoms, for your children, but if you neglect teaching them about their sin before God and their forgiveness of sin before God in the crucified and risen Jesus, you've missed the most important item.

Finally, children, when you are wrong in Mom's eyes, go to your mother and ask for her forgiveness. Don't just think, She'll get over it. And children, remember your mom is not perfect. Forgive her for her shortcomings. In all aspects of family life—be it parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, the words of Scripture apply: *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as in Christ, God forgave you (Ephesians 4:32).* This is putting into practice, the peace of God that comes to you like a river in Jesus, nourishing you, comforting you, and granting you joy. A blessed Mother's Day to each and every home.

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach---