

**Isaiah 66: 7-14a; “As One Whom His Mother Comforts”, A Sermon
delivered on Mother’s Day, May 12th, 2013, by Pastor
Paul Rendall in the Morning Worship Service.**

We have come once again to Mother’s Day, and we wish to honor those mothers and those godly single women who act as mothers on many occasions. I think that we can do nothing better than to look at the conduct of God Himself toward His ancient people the Jews; who, in this passage it says, will experience the blessings of salvation coming to them through our Lord Jesus Christ in their conversion as a nation in the Latter Day glory of this present church age. Verse 8 says, "Who has heard such a thing?" "Who has seen such things?" "Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day?" "Or shall a nation be born at once?" This is referring to the conversion of the Jews and their being brought into the Church of Jesus Christ.

The Church is to have an abundance of glory bestowed upon her, yet in this present age, and through this means of God’s powerful working, it says in verse 11. Those who live to see those glorious days will “be delighted with the abundance of her glory.” Truly this is an amazing chapter for it speaks of Zion, the New Testament Church as a mother, and it speaks of God Himself acting as a mother would act in relation to all His elect children, Jew and Gentile, who will be brought together in great numbers, in one magnificent fruitful church, for the glory of His Son in those days.

And the key to preaching this passage in a way that honors mothers, appears to me to be found in verse 13: “As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.” Even as children are comforted in their having a mother, or having had her raise them; so God's children are comforted by what God does for them spiritually, in conveying His blessings to them in a real and personal way; just like a mother. Some of the comforts and consolations which God brings to a godly mother and her children are listed for us here. Let me bring them out for you to see.

1st of all – We are comforted by the very wonderful reality that God is the One who allowed our mother to give birth to us. (verses 7-9) 2nd - It is a very great comfort to us, God's children, that our mother nursed us in physical things, and also in spiritual things. (verses 10 and 11) And 3rd – It is a great joy to us, God's believing children, that even as our mother comforted us when we were young, so God comforts us when we grow older. (verses 12-14a). So let us meditate together on these truths, while we think of the godly mothers whom we have known, and let us give thanks for them.

1st – We are comforted by the very wonderful reality that God is the One who allowed our mother to give birth to us. (verses 7-9)

Today we would praise God for our mother. It is a great comfort for a mother and a father to be able to have children. It is the fulfillment of one of the great reasons for their marital existence; to be able to become one flesh, and out of that

union come children who will be raised to be a glory to God. They are intended, as they grow up, to be extensions of their own life, their own values, their own desires to see Christ's kingdom grow and flourish. "Lo, Children are a gift (a heritage) of the Lord." "The fruit of the womb is his reward." "As arrows in the hand of a mighty man, so are the children of one's youth," it says in Psalm 127, verses 3 and 4, in the American Standard Version. So too, we should honor godly mothers because they are the ones who raise us, and pray for us to become the "heritage of the Lord." The Church of Jesus Christ is spoken of in the book of Galatians, chapter 4, verses 26 and 27 as our mother; the mother of all who believe.

It says there – "But the Jerusalem above is free, which is our mother." "For it is written, 'Rejoice, O barren that does not bear; break forth and shout, you who are not in labor! For more are the children of the desolate than of her that hath the husband.'" This is not talking about the triumphant church above, in heaven. It is talking about the Church of Jesus Christ who has been preaching the gospel from the time of the Apostles all the way down to this present day.

The Jerusalem above consists of those who have been born from above; those who have a heavenly calling. It is the Church which is alive upon the earth; even now children are being born in her, to God's glory. Sarah, Abraham's wife was barren, but God would give her a child, through her faith in His promise, and through him all the nations of the world would be blessed. She had to wait a long time to become a mother; even until she was old and past the age of childbearing. But she did become a mother.

And even now, the Church of Jesus Christ has had to wait and is still waiting to bear children unto God. It may be so, that she might even come to the place in our day where it might seem that she is barren, so few conceptions, or conversions, are taking place in her. But because of Christ, her husband, she comes to be the joyful mother of children. The Church is the mother of us all in the gospel. Let me ask, dear Christian whether you love your spiritual mother, the church? Someone had to preach to you the word so that you might be born again.

Someone wanted to share it with you. It was a someone who was already a part of the Church. And how thankful we are; we who have believed, that it was so. It is a great comfort for children to have a godly mother whether we are speaking of the physical family or the spiritual family. Both know the comforts which come from God. The description which is given to us in verse 7 is actually kind of scary for a prospective mother. She is getting ready to have a baby, and she knows that there is going to be labor and finally after some time there will be the delivery of her child.

She is not looking forward to the labor, even as Jesus says in John 16: 21. "A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world." But here in our text something quite astonishing has happened. "Before she was in labor, she gave birth; before

her pain came, she delivered a male child.” “Who has heard such things?” Sometimes you do hear about a woman who did not have much labor at all. She delivered on the way to the hospital. She didn’t have all the trouble that she anticipated having. In fact it was way too easy. We all sympathize with her because she wanted to make it to the hospital but could not, and others had to come to her rescue on the way. It might have been embarrassing to her. It might have been awkward; but still God was with her even in that awkward and difficult situation, to bring delivery.

The woman of our text was something like this. In fact her case was more astonishing yet. It was not an awkward and difficult birth for her; but it was sudden. She had no labor at all. “Before she was in labor, she gave birth; before her pain came, she delivered a male child.” Now what does this mean? Well, first of all it means that birth is a very special part of life, and God takes a very special notice of it. If God takes special notice of it, I think that you and I ought to be able to think about it on this day, Mother’s Day.

God is the author of life. He gives our life to us through our mother. You and I ought to give thanks and we ought to be comforted by the wonderful reality that God is the one who allowed our mother to give birth to us. We are living proof of the mercy of God, in the fact that we are here today. Birth is such a miracle of God. I know it is a natural part and process of life. But God is very much in it, working out His purposes. God is in all the natural processes of life. It is a part of our faith that we take notice of it.

We are born into a fallen world and we live in a fallen world; a world cursed by Adam’s sin, and Eve’s deception in eating the forbidden fruit; but nevertheless, God has mercy on many mothers and helps them deliver their babies. A while back, I received a letter from Blank children’s hospital asking for money for their good work of helping and caring for children; some of them born prematurely. They used the example of little Benjamin Harrington, born to Scott and Katherine Harrington; his anxious parents. They were anxious because he was born 3 months early.

Weighing just less than two pounds, Scott’s wedding ring fit on Benjamin’s arm. They had great concerns as to whether he would live. There at the hospital, the expert neonatologists and specially trained nurses surrounded him with loving care and the latest advances for premature infants. Unfortunately, he experienced some of the complications common to premies. “The nurses spent a lot of time with us,” said Katherine, “preparing us for the complications many premies face – problems with the heart, brain, lungs and eyes.” “It was overwhelming, but I knew he was in the best place he could be.” “They were a tremendous resource.”

In the letter that I received they have a picture of him all hooked up to various tubes and then another of him at 16 months looking normal. What a tremendous thing! The staff there did a great job. But I ask you; if God would not have purposed that he should respond positively at critical points to all the means that

were being used, would he have lived? Would he have improved, and grown stronger, breathed on his own, or gained weight? No, not without God's blessing. And so we need to rejoice in the means that God uses. But we need to look beyond them to God. It is God who brought us into this world through our mother.

Look at verse 9. "Shall I bring to the time of birth, and not cause delivery?" says the Lord. "Shall I who cause delivery shut up the womb? says your God." Some women have great pain and great labor before they give birth, and some have very little or no pain when they give birth, but God's mercy and God's goodness is over all His works. You are one of His works, and He has allowed you to come into this world. Birth is all of God. Whether your mother had an easy labor, or no labor, is of God.

Whether your mother had a difficult labor, or an awkward labor, still God was very present in it. God is the One who helped your mother. Will you not thank God for your mother this morning, that she was willing to suffer the agonies of childbirth on your behalf so that you could come into the world? Rachel, Jacob's wife, wanted children so badly, that at one point she impatiently prayed, "Give me children, or I die!" And God did give her children and she did die. God is very serious about the way that we view His sovereignty.

Nothing is impossible for Him. But we think that if we have difficulties, that those difficulties are not supposed to be. Everything is supposed to be smooth. And sometimes it isn't. In a fallen world, nothing is easy is it? Ah, we have forgotten that with God, sometimes, some things can be much smoother and much easier than we think. It is because of His perfections that it is so. We should pray and believingly look for it to be so, if God is in it.

Here in our text, it is speaking of a time in Church history when there has been very little conversion work; where the Church thinks that she is barren. She has tried hard to have children, but has not been able to make it happen. Is it too hard a situation for God to change? No, beloved. Because when it happens; perhaps in our own day, we will understand and admire the power and purpose of God. "Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day?" "Shall a nation be born at once?" "For as soon as Zion was in labor, she gave birth to her children."

How can this be, you say? It can be, and it will be, through the travail of the soul of Jesus Christ. He went to the cross and suffered and bled and died so that His labors would bring forth children. You should give thanks this morning that you have been born and that your mother went through some suffering and some difficulty to bring you into the world. But let me ask you; have you been born again? Have you had the gospel of Jesus Christ; the seed of the word of God, planted in your heart so that you have been given the second birth?

Do you know the reality of the new life in Jesus Christ? Then praise the Lord Jesus that He suffered that your soul might be delivered for sin. Praise Him for your mother, the church, who preached the gospel to you. God mothered you through Christ's Church; she who preached the gospel to you and prayed that

there would be conception in your heart. You remember your physical birthday because your parents told you when you were born, and you mark that day off every year and celebrate. But do you do the same with your spiritual birthday? Perhaps you cannot remember the day when you were born again. But if you think carefully, you will probably remember the time period when you knew that you came to believe in Christ, and when He came into your heart and gave you the second birth.

I think that it is just as appropriate, and even more so, that you remember this, as it is for you to remember your physical birthday. But even if you do not remember that; remember your mother who bore you, remember her on this day.

Now 2nd – It is a very great comfort to us, God’s children, that our mother nursed us in physical things and that she also nurses us in spiritual things. (verses 10 and 11)

“Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all you who love her; rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn for her; that you may feed and be satisfied with the consolation of her bosom, that you may drink deeply and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.” Let us give thanks this morning for a mother who not only birthed us, but also a mother who nursed us up. She is the one who gave us the breast and fed us with that milk which God alone could supply her. Little children need the comfort and encouragement of the breast.

God has appointed that the mother give her breasts to her children, not only for nourishment but also for comfort. It is a very needful part of their growing up in the first stage of their life. The mother is giving of her very self and her very life to the strengthening of the child. How thankful you ought to be to your mother that she spent all the time that she did, feeding you and comforting you with herself. You probably don’t even remember it, but it was a very necessary part of your growth and development.

Spiritually this is the case for believers as well. The Church, as your mother, has something to give you as a young believer. If you have a spiritual appetite you will come looking for the breasts of consolation which only the Lord can give you. He gives these to His Church to give to you. He gives them to you through His ministers in the preaching of His word. 1st Peter 2: 2 – “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”

The young Christian is to desire the breasts of nourishment and consolation that the Lord gives to him through his spiritual mother. There in the Church he not only partakes of spiritual food and nourishment, but he is comforted by the Lord’s presence and blessing ministering to him. And he also partakes of the two ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. And as John Gill well says – “These are not dry breasts”. The wonder of having a godly mother; one who knows the Lord, is that she is able to give us both; physical nourishment when we are little, and then spiritual nourishment through the word when we get older.

Do you praise the Lord for this? You ought to do so today. Your mother, the one who held you to her bosom when you were a little child, is still there for you as you grow up. She is there to nourish your mind, your soul, and your heart. She is still there to comfort you, to encourage you, and to teach you. I think that it is very important that we understand how important and significant motherhood is; at all stages in the growing process of our children. And even if you are not a joyful mother of children in the home, even if you are a grandmother or even a single woman who is not yet married, or once was married, or a person who does not intend to marry; you still have much to give for Christ's kingdom and cause.

Everyone in this world needs a mother; and even some who do not think so, need a mother. I am personally very thankful for a mother who was interested in my becoming and making something of my life, even when I was not. I think that when I went off to college and I came back worse, worse in my looks and worse my attitudes, it was a matter of great personal concern to her. She would write me letters about it, not realizing that my dear father was also praying behind the scenes that I would become a Christian, and that she herself would become a Christian.

But her influence as a woman who cared enough to tell me about myself made a big difference in my young life. Much of what we eventually become as men is often due to the loving influence of a mother who really cared enough to give us what we physically needed when we were infants, and spiritually when we were teens. The Lord mightily uses these things in our lives if we will only stop and think about them. Thank the Lord today if your mother nursed you in physical things when you were young, and nurses you now when you are older, in spiritual things.

3rd – It is a great joy to us, God's believing children, that even as our mother comforted us when we were young, so God Himself comforts us as we grow older by giving us spiritual comforts through Jesus Christ. (verses 12 and 13)

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." "When you see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like grass...." The verses in their context are speaking about the New Testament Church, the spiritual New Jerusalem, and how God Himself shall comfort those who mourn over the seeming lack of progress in the advance of Christ's kingdom and the advance of holiness in the earth.

Verse 10 says – "Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all you who love her; rejoice for joy with all you who mourn for her; that you may feed and be satisfied with the consolation of her bosom." This comfort which God brings to your soul is something that for the Christian grows with the years if they pay attention to it. Are you a Christian? Then the God of all comfort and the Father of

mercies will be comforting you in all your trials and all your afflictions, even as your mother used to do when you were younger. Who was it that you went to, when you fell and hurt yourself, or when you cut yourself on that sharp piece of glass? Who was it that you went to when others bullied you at school when you were in the younger grades? Who was it that you went to when you needed answers and advice about the meaning of anything that you did not understand in this life? You went to your mother.

You fed on her wisdom. You fed on her love and affection for you. She was there for you when you needed her. When you first become a Christian you are a babe in spiritual things. As you begin to grow in Christ, if you are walking in the Spirit, you are very zealous for His kingdom. And then as the years go by, you begin to grow a little more into maturity in Christ, through various trials and sufferings. And sometimes, then, you lose your former zeal and your former joy because there is no one there in your life, like your mother, to comfort you.

We need to take this text to heart. If you believe in Jesus, God has given you a mother in the Church. He has given you a mother in Himself. Do you remember how the Apostle Paul ministered to the baby believers in Thessalonica? This is how you and I as the Church ought to minister to one another. In 1st Thessalonians 2, verse 7 he says – “But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.” “So affectionately longing for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.”

There it is brethren. He did not just tell them to buck up when these young believers were facing persecution. There was a motherly care of them. There was gentle nourishing taking place. There was affectionate longing expressed. There was an imparting of their lives to those believers. How is it with you? Do you have a spiritual mothering instinct? Bless God if you do. You will be able to feed others spiritually. You will be able to carry others on your sides, and dandle them on your knees, spiritually, if you have it.

But even if the Church seems to fail entirely at some points in its history, there is still the ultimate source of mothering comfort. It will come to the believer from God Himself. "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem." If we cannot be comforted in seeing Christ's kingdom grow and His Church increase, let us remember that the time is coming when God will bring the conversion of the Jews and great conversion work among the heathen nations.

Be comforted by His promise. “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” “Lo, I am with you always until the end of the age.” The Apostle Paul knew the reality of this. He said – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” “For as the sufferings of Christ abound

in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.” All of our comfort which God brings to us as believers rests upon Christ. And Paul said in 2nd Timothy 4: 16, late in his life – “At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me.” “My it not be charged against them.” “But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear.” This was a great comfort to him; that God was with him.

And thus we love and will honor all the godly mothers in our midst today. For in their fulfilling their role and walking closely with their Savior, they minister to us the wisdom, and grace, and comfort of God to us; soul and body. And for this we are thankful.