



MATT BLACK, Sun, May 13, 2018
livinghopechurch.net

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GOD'S LOVE GREATER THAN A MOTHER'S LOVE

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Announcements

1. Welcome visitors!
2. VBS is coming in July, but we are accepting donations right now. Remember VBS is not part of our church budget. It is put entirely out of the free will offerings of God's people. If you would like to donate you can put it in the offering plate or in the donations box in the church lobby.
3. Child dedications, May 27, sign up at the Welcome center today.

It is Mother's Day, and it is appropriate that we honor the mother God gave to each one of us. Every day should be Mother's Day (and Father's Day). The fifth commandment teaches us that we honor God by honoring our mother and father. A good mother is the best friend any one can have on the earth. We should reverence the mothers and grandmothers in our life.

I want to say "thank you" to all the mothers and grandmothers here today and encourage all of you to breath out a prayer of thankfulness of your mom. God is good in giving us the mother he has given us.

For some this day is difficult because you did not have a good example for a mother. But we all have a perfect heavenly Father that we can look to.

I want to welcome all those who are visiting with us. It is our hope today that you came not to hear a sermon this morning, but that you came to experience the God who created you and died in your place so that you could live forever.

Introduction

Open your Bibles to **Isaiah 49:13-16**. This morning we are going to see how great our heavenly Father's love is for us. Our message this morning is entitled "God Loves us More than Any Mother".

God loves us more than any mother. Do you believe that? The Bible teaches this to us, but I think we don't believe it. If we did, our hearts would not be so jerked around by the roller coaster of this life. We need to fix our eyes on his love. He loves us. The problem is, so often we don't believe he loves us. I want to talk about why we fail to believe God. But let me first tell you the story of William Cowper.

William Cowper

William Cowper is probably best known as one of the best friends of John Newton who wrote the beloved hymn, "Amazing Grace." Cowper was also an amazing poet who wrote many hymns.

Cowper struggled with deep mental illness of depression and tried to commit suicide seven times. Some of those times John Newton had to stop him. Often William Cowper did not feel the love of God. He felt the weight of depression. He felt alone, isolated and abandoned. He wrote:

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.*

William Cowper came to understand what I want to teach this morning. It's this: just because you feel alone isolated and abandoned, does not make it true. Your feelings and circumstances do not tell you the truth. Your feelings often misinterpret reality.

Your heart and mind have been affected by sin. Sin has broken your ability to interpret reality. You cannot see reality rightly without looking through the lens of God's Word. The Bible is filled with warnings to us not to trust our own heart. Hear me saints: do not trust your heart, your feelings or your circumstances to tell you the truth. The only righteous interpreter of your life is God's Word.

God's Word tells us this: God loves you. He loves you more than any mother ever could. This is what Isaiah tells us in the forty-ninth chapter. Let's stand as we read **Isaiah 49:13-16**, "Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted. 14 But Zion said, 'The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me.' 15 'Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. 16 Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me.'"

Outline

There is no love like a mother's love, but God's love is greater. This morning we are going to see:

- God's hope is greater than a mother's **Hope**
- God's hearing is greater than a mother's **Hearing**
- God's heart is greater than a mother's **Heart**
- God's hands are greater than a mother's **Hands**
- God's help is greater than a mother's **Help**

We are going to see that as great as a mother's love is, God's love for his children surpasses the best mother's love for her child. This morning I want to tell you about the incomprehensible, immeasurable, amazing and awesome love of God for undeserving sinners. God put an amazing love in a mother's heart to show us his love for us. His love is greater than even a mother's love. God gives us far more hope than even the best of mothers.

1. GOD'S HOPE IS GREATER THAN A MOTHER'S HOPE

WE OFTEN LACK ANY HOPE

The truth is, we often lack any hope. God tells all creation to sing. Isaiah is looking forward to the captivity of Israel (Judah), which will last 70 years. He's getting God's people ready for suffering. The country of Israel will be invaded by the Babylonians. The families of Israel will be enslaved and brought to a foreign land. Babylon is the Iraq of today. God's purpose in his people suffering is merciful. He wants to purify them. He wants to draw them closer to himself. He loves them more than the very best mother ever could love her infant child. So, God announces something to his precious saints:

“Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing!
For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted”
(49:13).

How do his precious saints respond? They respond how we often respond to the revealed Word of God.

“But Zion said, ‘The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me’” (49:14).

The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me. That's how we feel. In spite of the perfect record of his Word. In spite of his unblemished reputation of loving his people relentlessly and unconditionally, we choose to believe our feelings. I feel forsaken. I feel forgotten. Therefore, the Lord has abandoned me. He's stopped loving me. Do you ever feel that way? I feel abandoned on a regular basis. Although I am a joyful person and a happy personality, I feel depressed at times. I feel forgotten and forsaken.

But, does that mean I am forsaken? Has the Lord abandoned me? Never! We hear the words of Jesus in **Hebrews 13:5**, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (cf **Psa 37:28**).

The Noetic Effect of Sin

The reason you and I have a serious problem believing the promises of God and living in the hope of God's love and eternal life is because of what **theologians** call the *noetic effect of sin*. Sin has had such a destructive effect on our mind and heart that we as human beings that our morals and our logic is twisted.

The Greek word for “mind” is “nous” (pronounced KNOWS). Therefore, “noetic” deals with the mind, or the rational aspect of the person. This effect means that our reasoning abilities are no longer pure and proper all the time. But, it does not mean we will always reason improperly. We can think rationally, use mathematics, make proper judgments, etc.

It's like you are trying to look out of a broken windshield with a thousand cracks. You can't see straight. It's like trying to look out glasses that are caked with mud. There is a blindness to our minds and hearts.

John Calvin said, “the depravity of the human will obscures our ability to understand and respond to God's revelation of himself.”¹

Biblical Support for Sin's Effect

We all know that our hearts and minds don't think straight because of sin. Serious disorders occur in all of us: depression, bitterness, pride, anger. All these things effect our understanding of God's reality.

Big Truth: Sin has had such an effect on you that unless your mind is surrendered to the truth of the Word of God and the power of the Spirit of God, your thinking will remain foolish and darkened.

¹ John Calvin in Norman L. Geisler, “Noetic Effects of Sin,” *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 540.

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom 7:18, KJV).

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jer 17:9).

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths" (Prov 3:5-6).

"Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered" (Prov 28:26).

"The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit" (1 Cor 2:14).

Paul says in Romans 1:21 (paraphrase): "Although people know God, they do not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but [because of sin] they have become foolish in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened."

Biblical Examples for Sin's Effect

So many of God's saints have felt forgotten.

David cried in **Psalm 22:1**, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?"

Naomi felt forsaken by God. She says, "No longer call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me" (Ruth 1:20).

Remember **Joseph** sat silently in prison for at least two years without hearing from God.

Job said life was so bad that it would have been better had he never been born (**Job 10:18**).

Paul said he had been treated like the "offscouring" – the scum – of the earth (**1 Cor 4:13**).

Let me summarize these verses once again.

Big Truth: Sin has had such an effect on you that unless your mind is surrendered to the truth of the Word of God and the power of the Spirit of God, your thinking will remain foolish and darkened.

In other words, don't trust your heart. Your moral inclinations are not clear. You will be confused by your emotions. Don't trust what you feel. Don't trust your circumstances. Sometimes you will feel God is punishing you when he really is just trying to draw you closer.

The point of this passage in Isaiah is that God's people are going to find themselves in heart-wrenching circumstances and will be tempted to doubt God's love.

Here's what God says, "If creation could know how much I love you, the **heavens and the earth** would **sing for joy**, and the **mountains** would **break forth into singing**. Why? Because **the Lord** delights in **comforting his people**. He will have

compassion on his dear afflicted saints. Hear the Lord commanding creation to sing because of his love for his people:

“Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing!
For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted”
(49:13).

I love the verse in Zephaniah 3:17 that describes God's joy over us. “The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.”

The truth is we are in union with Christ. We are going to have many deaths and resurrections. There will be many times we are on a cross crying out: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Psa 22:1).

In spite of this, if you knew God's plans for you, you would cry out with singing. A mother's hope can only go so far, but God's hope, biblically is a “sure expectation.”

MOMS HOPE THE BEST

If you could understand the Lord's love for you, you would sing. All creation would sing. A mother hopes the best for her child. When they are young she dreams about what they will become. A mother has great optimism for the success of her child. She does everything necessary for that child to succeed. She gets the best baby **food**. When the children were young, Jill would buy the best fresh fruits and vegetables and puree them. She wants the best for our children. She wants our children to succeed. A mother tries to get her children the best **education** and training for life. We want our children to do better than us. We want the very best for them! Mothers try their very best and fail very often. Can I get a witness? I speak with mothers often, and I have not yet found a mother that did not feel like a profound failure. Mothers have such high expectations, but hardly ever reach them.

Most mothers live with a profound sense of guilt, a kind of surface level guilt. They feel like they will never measure up. This is especially true when our children have failures in life (which they all do). There is no child that does have numerous failures. When a child fails, the parents feel like failures, but it especially hits mothers hard. Moms, our kids are going to fail. They will fail often. Sometimes they will fail spectacularly.

You know God's kids fail every day, and God is a perfect Father. And he has a love greater than the best mother. But God's kids fail every day. Does that make God a failure? Never!

The reason you feel like such a failure, abandoned by God so often is because of sin's effect on your mind. You have trouble believing the promises of God's love in his Word. God knows that ahead of time. That's why he wrote Isaiah 49.

A Mother's Hope for Her Child

A mother always hopes the best for her child. Yet of course our children often fail. A child at times will dash the hopes of his or her mother. Yet a mother hopes the best for her child. A mother constantly encourages her child and gives that child every reason to hope for the best.

How much more does God love us and want the best for us. How did he love us? In what way did he love us? “In this way God loved the world, that he gave his unique and promised Son that whoever believes on him will never perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn 3:16).

Yet God's hope is greater than any mother's hope. God's desire to do us good never ceases. **Verse 13**, we hear God telling the heavens to rejoice. He says, “Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted” (49:13).

A GREATER HOPE: A SURE EXPECTATION

God's hope is a different kind of hope than that of a mother's hope. I mother can only do so much, but biblically, as I said before, God's hope is a sure expectation. When we say Jesus is our living hope, we don't mean wishful thinking. Our hope is rooted in reality, in what will absolutely come to pass. Jesus died and rose again, and so I will be raised when he comes again. I will get a new body. That's my living hope. I have eternal salvation because of Jesus. That's **not wishful thinking**. That is a **sure expectation**.

All creation should rejoice over the great gift God has given us. They should **break forth into singing**. Why? God gives us a greater hope than a mother. He gives us hope in Jesus Christ. God offers “mercy upon his afflicted”. Mercy is not given to innocent people, but only to guilty people. The children of Israel had gotten themselves into this mess. They worshipped idols. They forsook God. They sought their own way.

Yet God sends hope to them. They don't deserve it. But from the very beginning God gave them hope that the Messiah would come and take away their sins!

THE HOPE OF JESUS

This chapter is all about the greatest hope in the universe. The beginning of **Isaiah 49** is all about the Messiah coming to rescue not only Israel, but the whole world! Listen, as great a hope that a mother can offer her child, God give you a hope that surpasses any mother's hope!

Turn over a few chapters to **Isaiah 53**. We have cause for singing today because as guilty sinners we deserve hell, but God has given us mercy! He's given mercy to His afflicted!! **Isaiah 53:6**, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all”. Now look at the last part of verse 8, “for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.” Now look at verse 10, “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief”. Now verse 11, “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.”

What hope we have in Christ. Turn back to **Isaiah 49:6**. God the Father is speaking to His Only Son in **verse 6**, and he says that he will “restore the preserved of Israel” and he says, “I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.”

That's why in **verse 13**, God tells the heavens and earth to be joyful and for the mountains to break forth into singing! What a hope. A mother gives great hope to her children, but God's hope is greater than any mother's. He gives us hope in Christ!

God's love is so great for the undeserving, that we can only weep with joy. If you find yourself today guilty, if you've ever felt abandoned because of your own sin, if you've ever messed up royally in your life, and feel unloved and unlovable, then today's message is for you.

2. GOD'S HEARING IS GREATER THAN A MOTHER'S HEARING

MOMS HAVE AMAZING HEARING

God is always masculine in the Scriptures, but he says here that his love is greater than that of a mother's love. His hearing is amazing. If a mother hears her baby cry, that's a good mother. But God's hearing is better.

A mother's hearing is amazing. I got in trouble too many times because I doubted my mother's hearing. A mother hears everything. Children try to hide things from their mother's ears, but mom always seems to know everything!

One thing that is special about a mother's hearing, is she hears the cry of her baby. She knows what that cry means. She can tell if that cry means the baby needs a diaper change or if that cry means the baby is in trouble. That is because a mother loves her child. Her compassion is great!

GOD'S HEARING IS BETTER

God's compassion is greater for His children. His hearing is tuned in to your every cry if you are His child! Listen to **Isaiah 49:14-15**,

“But Zion said, “The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me.” 15 “Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you” (49:14-15)

Zion's Cry

God hears Zion's cry! “Zion” accuses God of forsaking her. It looked like God had abandoned Zion. We have to ask, who is “Zion”? Zion means “citadel.” It means we are God's citadel, protected by God. At one time there was a citadel on Mount Moriah that belonged to the Jebusites, and King David captured it (2 Sam 5:7). But it became a nickname for Jerusalem specifically, and all of God's people generally. Zion originally was a nickname for Mount Moriah, where the Temple sits upon. It came to be God's chosen name for his children. Zion is a special name for true believers in the Lord. He speaks not of all Israel, but of those believing in him. We are in God's citadel, that is why we are called Zion. We are protected by God.

Do you think God hears when his citadel is under attack? Do you think God is going to respond to the warning?

A Baby's Cry

Another picture here is that of a baby. God loves us more than a mama loves her baby. When that baby cries, a mama hears that little child. But God's hearing is better than a mama's hearing! He says to you “I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself” (**Jeremiah 31:3**, NLT). He hears your

cry! He says, “Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden [surprising] things that you have not known” (Jer 33:3).

The Sinner's Cry

Can I just also add that God hears the sinner's cry. We are all sinners, aren't we? The context is *sinful Israel* afflicted by the consequences of their own sin. Because of Israel's own sin, God prophesied through Isaiah that the nation would be taken away from their land for 70 years. In Isaiah's lifetime the northern ten tribes of the nation of Israel were conquered by Assyria (modern day Iran). Most families were deported there. They were foreigners now in a strange new country. The language was different. The customs were different. They felt as if God had forsaken them! Life was so hard. They cried and cried, but their circumstances didn't change. They were there for 70 years.

It was not God that had forsaken them. They had forsaken God. If you read back in **Isaiah 48:18-19**, Isaiah says they got themselves into this mess themselves. “Oh that you had paid attention to my commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea; ¹⁹ your offspring would have been like the sand, and your descendants like its grains; their name would never be cut off or destroyed from before me.” God still had those good promises to multiply them (i.e. Abrahamic covenant), but his greater work was inside their hearts.

God promised that if Israel obeyed him, they would be blessed, but if they rebelled, they would be taken by other nations. That is exactly what happened. They broke God's commandments and broke their fellowship with God.

In spite of all our sin and disobedience, God loves sinners! You cannot imagine or comprehend how much God loves undeserving sinners. God draws undeserving sinners! “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).

3. GOD'S HEART IS GREATER THAN A MOTHER'S HEART

MOTHERS LOVE THEIR BABIES

God tells us something amazing, that ***if you are His child, you are loved by God more than any human mother could love her infant child.*** How much do you mothers love your children? Combine the love of all mothers that have ever existed, and God the Father loves His children more than that.

“Can a woman **forget** her nursing **child**, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you” (49:15). What grace there is with God! There may be a mother that could forget or forsake her nursing infant, but God's love is infinitely greater! He will never forget you and never forsake you!

GOD LOVES US MORE THAN A MOTHER EVER COULD

There is no love in the world like a mother's love, yet God's love is greater than that! However much pain a mother has suffered because of her child, however much trouble it was to bear the child, no matter what trouble he gets into in his life, a mother never stops loving her child.

We see God's compassion to our cry because God sent his only Son into the world for us. Look at Romans 8. God has heard our cry with tender compassion! God sent His Son! What amazing love. It surpasses a mother's love.

Romans 8:35-39, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36 As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Despite at times being led "as sheep to the slaughter," this does not separate us from the love of God. Indeed, "there is now no condemnation" (Rom 8:1). Indeed, "All things work together for good for those who love God and are the called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28). Indeed, everything that happens to us is part of God's plan to "conform us into the image of his dear Son" (**Rom 8:30**).

Love Like a Mother

God is compassionate like a **mother**. What would a mother not do to show love to her precious infant child? Now some mothers are more compassionate at certain times of the day than at others. After a long day, a mother may lose her compassion and be a bit impatient. God is never like that. God is more compassionate than any mother. A mother would give any thing out of love for her children! God gave His only Son for you so that you could have eternal life!

Romans 8:32, "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" What compassion.

4. GOD'S HANDS ARE GREATER THAN A MOTHER'S HANDS

A MARK OF A SLAVE UPON HIS HANDS

Isaiah 49:16 gives the picture of our names being engraved on the palms of God's hands, "Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands." In the ancient world, if a man was a slave, he would have his master's name cut into his hands. But here we see that the master has cut the servant's name upon his hands.

We read in Philippians 2, that Christ gladly went from the **highest place** to the **lowest place**. He went from **King** of the universe to **slave**. "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (**Phil 2:6-7**).

OUR SAVIOR'S MARKS

God says through Isaiah, *"Because of my unrelenting love, I have put a mark on my hand for you. I will serve you. I will be your Savior. I will pay the price for your sins."*

And Jesus did have those marks in his hands. He went to the cross. He “engraved us on the palms of his hands” (49:16).

Christ in Heaven is “as a Lamb slain”. Forever our Savior and Mediator has the marks of the Cross on His hands, those nail-prints always before Him. He says “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands”! Spurgeon said, “Jesus can give nothing, he can take nothing, he can do nothing, he can hold nothing, without remembering you!”

My brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. He has always had you in His mind. He has always loved you. His hands prove it.

Charles Wesley wrote a hymn about this verse:

Arise, My Soul, Arise

Arise, my soul, arise. Shake off thy guilty fears.

The bleeding sacrifice In my behalf appears.

Before the throne my Surety stands,

Before the throne my Surety stands;

My name is written on His hands.

5. GOD'S HELP IS GREATER THAN A MOTHER'S HELP

JERUSALEM'S WALLS

God has greater **boundaries of protection** than any mother. No matter what trouble a child gets themselves into, a mother wants to get them out of it. Yet the Lord's help is greater than any mother's. God's care and protection for his children is greater than a mother who protects her nursing infant. **Verse 16** says, “Behold, I have graven you upon the palms of my hands; your walls [OF PROTECTION] are continually before me.”

A MOTHER'S WALLS

Children can grow up and have times of selfishness and even cause great sorrow to a mother's heart. Yet a mother is always there for her child to come to the rescue.

You remember when you fell off your bike or skinned your knee, your mother was always there watching out for you. She was there with that band aid. When you were sick, she was there to wipe your nose! She made sure the walls of her protection were always around you.

GOD'S WALLS

Context. The Jews in Assyria were ripped from their fenced cities in Israel. They seemed completely vulnerable and unprotected.

Illustration: You mothers, you remember when you held that little baby in your arms for the first time? What joy you had. No one could rip that baby from you. And as strong as that emotion courses through your veins, God feels infinitely stronger and more jealous for every one of His children.

Jesus said in **John 10:28-29**, “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.”

God is always looking out for you. If you are His child, then His love for you is more than you can ever comprehend or imagine.

Conclusion

God's love is even greater than that of a mother. When I was a child I loved riding my bicycle, and at times I would be a little too daring and wipe out on the concrete. My mother's watchful eye was upon me and I would look up and she would see my bloody knee. And she would wipe away my tears and tend to my scrape.

God's love is greater than any mother's love. What love God has for you as his child! How many tears does a mother wipe away from her child's face? Yet we read of God in **Revelation 21:4**, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." If you've never put your trust in him, surrender your life to him today. Jesus alone can wipe away all your tears.

Let's praise God for his everlasting love to us. Happy Mother's Day.