

A mother's love is special! How else would you describe huge men in uniforms taking off their helmets, turning toward the sideline camera to say: “Hi Mom!” You know, they never say: “Hi Dad.” It's always: “Hi Mom.” A mother's love is special!

A mother's love runs deep! A reporter was doing an investigative report on maximum security prisons. He found that over 80% of the prisoners' outgoing letters were addressed to their moms. Even though these men and women had committed terrible crimes, they knew their moms would still accept them, read their letters and write back. A mother's love cannot forget her child, even when they're behind bars. A mother's love runs deep!

A mother's love for her child is one of the strongest human forces we know. And if you've been blessed with a Christian mom, well then, let's just say you've been doubly blessed.

And yet, in our lesson on this Mother's Day weekend, the prophet Isaiah talks about a love even greater than a mother's: **But Zion said, “The Lord has abandoned me. The Lord has forgotten me.” Can a woman forget her nursing child and not show mercy to the son from her womb? Even if these women could forget, I will never forget you. Look, I have tattooed you on the palms of my hands.**

The Bible has 66 books. The OT book of Isaiah has 66 chapters. Like the Bible, Isaiah is also divided into two parts. The first 39 chapters deal mainly with God's judgement on the Children of Israel. You know why God's OT people were called “children” don't you? They often acted like children. They whined to God. They argued with God. They picked fights with each other. It didn't take long, 3 verses into the first chapter, for God to scold them for their childish behavior: **The ox knows its owner, and the donkey knows its owner's manger, but Israel does not know. My people do not understand. How terrible ... for offspring who act wickedly, children who are**

corrupt! They have forsaken the Lord. They have despised the Holy One of Israel. They have deserted him.

Those are some harsh words! And yet, God wasn't about to forget them. Like a mother who sees her kids doing dangerous things, so God did what every parent would do, he warned them about the danger their souls were in. He sent his prophet, Isaiah, to alert the people and save them. The name Isaiah means “**the LORD saves,**” because that's exactly God's intention for his people.

Michael is 12. He and his cousins went swimming in a pond near their Florida home – like they had many times before. This time, a large alligator was at the edge of the pond. As they were splashing, one of them noticed the gator and began screaming for help. But Michael couldn't hear them because he was underwater. Michael's mom heard them and came running. She grabbed onto Michael's arms as the gator's jaws clamped down on his legs. It was a tug-a-war between a 250 lb. alligator and a 125 lb. mom. You know who won. The gator let go. Michael's mom pulled him to shore. Later on, Michael showed the scars on his legs from the gator bite. What he was most proud of ... the scars on his hands where his mom's fingernails dug in and wouldn't let go. She rescued him from death.

Isn't that a picture of Jesus' love? Satan's jaws clamped down on you. There was a tug-a-war for your soul. You were rescued, snatched you out of the jaws of death. The palms of his hands were scared by the nails driven into them on the cross. That's what the Lord says in Isaiah: **I have tattooed you on the palms of my hands.** A visible sign of Jesus' love for you.

If someone asked you: *How do you know you belong to your family?* What would you tell them? You'd point to your birth certificate and your full name – Daniel Robert Marshall. How do you know you're part of God's family? You'd point to another certificate, the one you got when you were

baptized. Through the water and the Word of Baptism, God made a special promise to you. He's your Father. You're his child.

When it's time to take a difficult test. When you have a hard day at work. When you have an extended hospital stay, God has promised: *You're my child. I'll take care of you.*

Celebrating Mother's Day can be like a difficult test for some.

- You can't spend it with your mom. She's no longer here.
- It brings back unpleasant memories of growing up.
- You'd like to be a mom, but God hasn't blessed you in this way.

No matter what your current situation, God says: *You're my child. I'll take care of you.*

While those two truths don't change, we still need to be reminded of them again and again. There are days when you may say out loud: **"The Lord has abandoned me. The Lord has forgotten me."** That's not an original thought. The Children of Israel said it over 2,500 years ago in our lesson.

Or maybe we whisper: *"Where is God when I need him?"* Life's trials can confuse us and lead us to doubt. Because we are weak and forgetful, we need to hear again and again the sweet reassuring pledge of our God: **"Can a woman forget her nursing child and not show mercy to the son from her womb? Even if these women could forget, I will never forget you."** That has to be one of the most beautiful descriptions of God's reassuring pledge in all of Scripture, don't you think?

We wouldn't expect a mother to forget her nursing baby. But even if it did happen in our messed-up world, the God of free and faithful love won't ever forget you. It's impossible. It can't happen since his love is higher, and deeper and wider than any mother could ever love a child.

God is now trying to get us to pay attention to something special. He says: **"Look!"** What does he want us to see? **"I have tattooed you on the palms of my hands."**

OT laws prohibited tattoos because they often had a direct connection to a false god, or the dead. Yet God uses that picture to emphasize how permanent his love is. What is tattooed on the palms of God's hands can't be removed with soap and water or any cleaner. It is permanent.

How often do you look at your hands during an average day? God has you tattooed on his hands as a constant reminder of you. What you experience every day ... good or bad ... is never out of God's sight, his attention or care.

When we complain that the Lord has forgotten us. He tells us: *How could I ever forget you? I've got you tattooed on the palms of my hands? Why on his hands? People often get tattoos in places they can't see. God wants to see his tattoos every day.*

He wants to look at us just like we look at pictures of our family on our walls, refrigerators and phones, in our offices, wallets and purses. These are pictures of the ones who mean the most to us ... like our moms.

Today we celebrate moms! Moms, you are the reason we are even here in the first place. You are from God. The goal of every Christian mom is to pass on to her kids the one and only thing they can take with them from this life. Their faith that Jesus loves them so much he's tattooed them on the palms of his hands.

Here's your Mother's Day assignment. Is your mom still alive? How soon can you thank her? If she isn't, how soon can you thank God for her?