

THE LORD'S TATOO

It is you, His Church -- Ever in His heart and mind.

Isaiah 49:13-16

TEXT: *Shout for joy, O heavens; rejoice, O earth; burst into song, O mountains! For the LORD comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones. But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me." "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

Mother's Day is coming! Those of you whose mothers are still on this earth, are you ready to show them how much you love and appreciate their love for you? The Lord Himself refers to the great love that a mother has for her child. He had Isaiah write: ***Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne?*** Even in the animal world, you all know that you should NEVER get caught between a mother grizzly bear and her cub!

Did you see on the news the video of that mother in Baltimore who identified her son as one of the rioters this past week? Even though her teenaged son was dressed in a black hoodie sweatshirt and a black scarf covering his identity, she recognized him on TV news. She then went out and found him throwing rocks at the police, confronted him and began to slap him up, left and right, across his hooded face until he began to run. But she ran after him and though he was tall and lean while she was on the portly side, she caught him and began to apply the physical discipline that he needed to save his life. While the typical liberal-minded idiots were critical of her discipline, others, including me, would nominate her for "mother of the year." Her love for her son caused her to go out to save him no matter what it would cost her!

Yet the Lord claims that his love for his Church is even greater than that of a mother. He wants you to know that you are ever in his heart and on his mind. In fact, God has a tattoo. It's a tattoo of you, his Church. He declares: ***See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.***

To have you "engraved" on the palms of his hands is saying that you are always before him. In fact, God says: ***Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands...*** While it's almost unheard of that a normal mother would ever forget her nursing child, that memory of one of the most loving and intimate times of bonding between mother and child that the Lord has created, that horrible fact is: ***she may forget...!***

Such is human love. Human love is not perfect. Scripture reveals that even the greatest of all human love is flawed by sin, like God says about a mother's love: fact is: ***she may forget...!*** Another powerful form of human love is the love between husband and wife. But look at the condition of that kind of human love in the world today! How strong was the love you said you had for God when you were confirmed? Shouldn't that love for God surpass all human love? Jesus said so. He said: ***Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me...***

Mt 10 How does this happen? It happens whenever and wherever anything, even the affection for father, mother, son or daughter, comes between you and the Word of God. The Bible says that Jesus is God's Word incarnate, that is, in the flesh. John 1 says it so clearly: ***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. ... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*** Jn 1 Therefore you cannot separate your love for Jesus from your love for God's Word!

So how does it look when only 30% of our members are in church to hear God's Word on any given Sunday? Does that look like love for Jesus? The first line of defense for the sinner is to blame God, as Adam did when the Lord said to him: What have you done? Did you eat the fruit...? Adam's famous defense was to blame God, and in doing so, blaming everyone else in his life: ***The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.*** Ge 3 Nothing has changed. Zion is one of the names the Lord uses for his Church. The Lord tells his Church to worship but instead there is whining and complaining and blaming God: ***Shout for joy, O heavens; rejoice, O earth; burst into song, O mountains! ... But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me."*** Old Testament Israel, couldn't keep from feeling sorry for themselves even though the prophets of God proclaimed that a Savior was coming to redeem them from their sins. They still couldn't stop loving the things of this world. How quickly we forget! How easily we are distracted so that the joy of the Gospel, the forgiveness of our sins, becomes just the "same old same old." How quickly our love weakens.

Worship! Rejoice! We just celebrated Easter and the hope of eternal life made certain by Jesus' resurrection from the dead! Even the inanimate heavens, the earth and the mountains are waiting to explode with joy for the coming of the Lord on Judgment Day. But in order to keep the joy of Easter in our hearts, let's take a look at the Lord's Tattoo. It is a reminder to us that we are ever in his heart and mind.

When the members of the Lord's Church feel down, fearful and depressed, the Lord tells us to take a look at his "tattoo:" Zion ***said, "The LORD has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me." "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.*** Look at the palms of his hands. That's not a tattoo made with ink. It's an engraving, scars cut with an instrument that cuts and leaves an indelible mark in the flesh. Look at them! They are the marks of the nails of his crucifixion. Not only does that demonstrate the Lord's love for you in that he suffered and died for the sins of the world, but it demonstrates the love that God the Heavenly Father has. As Jesus himself declared: ***God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*** Jn 3

Based upon this single most incomprehensible demonstration of God's love for us, ALL that Scripture says of God's love for you is true! He promises us our "daily bread." He promises that he will protect us from our enemies: ***When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident.*** Ps 27 In this political climate when Christians are hated by the secular humanists of today, what a comfort this is! Look at the Lord's tattoo! Look at your baptism

when he engraved YOUR name on the palms of his nail-pierced hands! Concerning your life on this earth, though you walk through valley after valley with those “shadows of death” looming, remember what is written: ***And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*** Ro 8 Without these promises that are proclaimed Sunday after Sunday in the Gospel sermons that are preached, without that powerful real presence in our lives that is fed to us in the Lord’s Supper, we all will get weak and perhaps even lose faith and die eternally. Without bringing our children to worship with us and to learn to listen to the words and promises of our Savior, they will succumb to the worldliness of those who hate us, as so many have fallen in the past. But here is the saving Word of God that holds before our eyes the Lord’s Tattoo!

Take a long and frequent stare at those wounds of His grace, and know without a doubt that it is you who is engraved there and who are the objects of his eternal love. Never doubt that every day of your life on this earth, you are in his heart and mind! Amen