

# High and Exalted (15): As a Mother Comforts Her Child

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(Isaiah 66:9-13)

## I. Introduction

- A. In the novel *The Shack*, the main character Mack gets an invitation to meet God
1. He doubts God sent him a note inviting “The Shack,” but he goes anyway
    - a. He meets black woman who is named Papa, his wife’s name for God
    - b. He gradually comes to believe “Papa” can be no one else other than God
  2. Naturally, book was blasted for depicting God as female... missing the point
    - a. Mack’s daughter Missy was abducted and murdered (never found body)
    - b. He was going through a long, deep depression he called “*the Great Sadness*”
    - c. His father had been an abusive alcoholic hiding behind façade of faith
  3. So Mack was angry; He was angry at his father and angry at the world
    - a. Most of all, he was angry at God for letting his little girl be taken away
      - 1) What Mack needed was to know that God loved him and had not let
      - 2) What Mack needed a mother, so that is how God presented himself
    - b. Later, after Mack is able forgives his father, Papa appears as old man |
    - c. You know, a Biblical depiction like George Burns or Morgan Freeman
- B. Today we conclude our study *High and Exalted: The Message of Book of Isaiah*
1. Title comes from Isaiah’s vision in **Isa 6**, “*I saw the Lord, high and exalted*”
    - a. Before Isaiah could serve as a prophet, he had to see God high and exalted
    - b. Isaiah will go into some dark places; he had to see God high and exalted
    - c. So I chose the title carefully (*after I found copyright-free background art*)
  2. In the second half of Isaiah, he speaks to the Judah who will go into exile
    - a. He will use several images to show Judah that God was with them
      - 1) God is the loving Shepherd who gathers His lambs in arms (**Isa 40:11**)
      - 2) God is the mighty warrior champion over their enemies (**Isa 42:13**)
      - 3) Isaiah is no more a widow because God is her husband (**Isa 54:4-5**)
    - b. Those are all male images to be sure, but that are just that– only images
      - 1) No one thinks that God is literally male– God has a Y chromosome
      - 2) It’s not even that God “identifies as male” (wouldn’t want to go there)
      - 3) These are images and figures; sometimes image is female (**Isa 42:14**)

- C. I did my best to be an involved Dad... and they turned out pretty well anyway
1. I invented a sport for Tressa that we called “Roof Ball” (be in the Olympics)
    - a. With Angelynn the sport was “Hall Soccer” (Mom made us stop that one)
      - 1) So, we came to the church building... which has a much better hall!
      - 2) They loved to play with Dad, but if they go hurt— only a mother with do
    - b. Isaiah pointed to a time when Israel would be hurting— needed a mother
  2. **Review:** Isaiah ministry spans from Uzziah to Hezekiah— very strong kings
    - a. In the early part of his book, he is threatening Judah with coming disaster
    - b. Every prophet worth his salt had a bag full of “gloom-n-doom” sermons
    - c. But Isaiah isn’t know as the doom-and-gloom prophet (that’s Jeremiah)
      - 1) No, Isaiah is the “Messianic Prophetic.” He points us to Christ
      - 2) Beginning in **Isaiah 40**, his message is of restoration and redemption
      - 3) God would hold his people accountable; God would also redeem them
    - d. This part of the book is more sweetness and light than gloom and doom
      - 1) Our text this morning is where we get the image “*The River of God*”
      - 2) It also points us to image of God as mother (**Read: Isaiah 66:10-13**)

## II. As a Mother Comforts Her Children

- A. God restoration and deliverance of His people would be sudden and dramatic
1. Was Rome built in a day? Well, it would have been if God had built it
    - a. Israel will be restored, and it will be something no one imagines (**Isa 66:8a**)
    - b. A sudden delivery while skipping labor was used in the verse before (**66:7**)
      - 1) If you’re a mom, then skipping labor and going to delivery is great idea
      - 2) If you’re the husband holding your wife’s hand, that’s great image too!
      - 3) That happened during Tressa’s birth; I was doing Lamaze breath for me
    - c. Earlier in the book, King Hezekiah used this imagery in reverse (**Isa 37:3**)
      - 1) He was so shaken by the threat of Assyria it was labor, no delivery
      - 2) God’s restoration would be just the opposite— birth without labor
  2. The imagery of **Isaiah 66** is that of motherhood, but the images changes a bit
    - a. At first, God is the midwife that promises to deliver Jerusalem (**Isa 66:9**)
    - b. But then, Jerusalem is the mother that nurses her children (**Isa 66:11-12**)
    - c. But the image changes again, and now God is the mother (**Isa 66:13**)

- B. God is both our Father and our Mother; He is protector and nurturer.
1. I know being a mom is hard, but sometimes being a Dad is tough too
    - a. You spend hours rolling a ball back and forth to your toddler
      - 1) Later, there are many more hours playing catch in the back yard
      - 2) You go the park and hit the ball so the kid can learn to shag fly balls
      - 3) You coach T-Ball and little league to make they learn fundamentals
      - 4) You drive the kid all over the place to games and camps and seminars
    - b. Then kid goes to college or a scholarship; it pays off, but it doesn't stop
      - 1) You drive hours every weekend so you can ne there for every game
      - 2) Then there is the day he hits the home run or catch the TD pass
      - 3) People are going crazy, and you're yelling, "*That's my boy!*"
    - c. What does the kid do every time? He turns to the camera... "*Hi, Mom!*"
  2. OK, Moms are special. There are times when only a mother will do
    - a. So that is the imagery here; God is a Mother who loves us like no other
      - 1) When world falls apart and we need to know we're loved, God is there
      - 2) When like Mack, our earthly father is abusive/neglectful, God is there
      - 3) When we are sick or we are tired or we are sick-n-tired, God is there
      - 4) When we are a failure and feel like no cares about us, God is there
    - b. I had two parents that loved me more than life, but they loved me differently
      - 1) One was tender and gentle; other was sterner and more demanding
      - 2) One understood when I was afraid; other expected me to get over it
      - 3) One was a shoulder to cry on; other was source of advice and counsel
      - 4) One sent notes when I was in college; other refused collect calls home
  3. Sometimes the roles changed; Mom was no pushover and Dad was a big goof
    - a. **Point:** I needed both of these to become the well-adjusted adult that I am
    - b. OK, I was waiting for an amen right here, but I guess we'll go on with it.
    - c. God is both our Father and our Mother; both images are true (**Deut 32:18**)
      - 1) God isn't literally male; he doesn't always have to have the remote
      - 2) God is like a father, a warrior, a shepherd, and a King... all male images
    - d. But there are times when God is also like a mother who loves is like mother
    - e. I think if we don't have room in our theology for this image, we are poorer

### III. Conclusion

- A. Because sometimes only a mother will do. We know that's right, right?
  - 1. I can remember times when the girls ran right past me to get to Momma
    - a. You run to Daddy when the bike chain comes off or you get a flat tire
    - b. But you run to Momma if you fall off the bike and skin your knee!
  - 2. There are times when only a Mother will do—that's still true today
    - a. Sometimes the girls call me to ask, "*Where's Mom?*" (Never has cell on)
    - b. They didn't call to talk to me; they wanted to talk to their mother
    - c. If they do call and ask to speak to me, I start reaching for my wallet
  - 3. Sometimes only a mother will do; that's true of our need for God too!
- B. Point here isn't about God's gender but His desire for intimacy with us
  - 1. God loves us so powerfully that He Himself becomes vulnerable to us
    - a. God loves so deeply He stepped into our history so we can know Him
    - b. God loves so intimately that He is heartbroken over us if we reject Him
    - c. God loves us so completely that He made Himself vulnerable even to death
    - d. God loves so deeply, intimately, sacrificially— He loves you like a mother
  - 2. God loves like a perfect Father, perfect mother, perfect sibling, perfect friend
    - a. God loves you forever; nothing will ever make Him stop (**Rom 8:37-39**)
    - b. Nothing will ever come between you and the love of God... nothing
      - 1) Oh, God's love has an edge to it; Isaiah points to that tough love
      - 2) Isaiah ends with sweetness-n-light and thunder-n-lighting (**66:22-25**)
    - c. When you come right down to it, all He asks is for you to love Him back
    - d. He gives us His heart; will you not give Him your heart today?