

23-66-01.wpd --The Mothering Heart of God
 motherhood, humanity, God's image, embodiment, nurture
 Isa 66:7-13
 Motherhood comes directly from the caring heart of God.

INTRODUCTION:

--[In his famous sermon, "The Weight of Glory," C. S. Lewis said, "There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal.... Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbour is the holiest object presented to your senses."] God created us in His image out of cosmic dust and His own breath, and **He wants that image honored**. When making His presence known to Moses in a burning bush, God said, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." If His representation in a bush demanded respect, how much more in the one part of physical creation expressly designed to bear His image and to become a temple for His holy Spirit!
 --Christians more than anyone ought to honor the human body and be the ones proclaiming *the glory of God* in His human image-- Gen 1:27, So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Both sexes of our race manifest the image of our Creator. Differences in human gender uniquely illustrate certain qualities in God's nature. Our **text** is an example of this. It gives a clear picture of how women, specifically in their role as mothers, reflect His image in a beautiful way, showing us that **HOM.idea**.

I. There Are Obstacles in Seeing Femininity in God

A. In general, this world has not held a God-honoring view of women

1. Women are called the "fairer sex" ["*There must be a God, because there are flowers and women.*"], **BUT** the beauty of the female body, which God meant for us to enjoy with respect, is dishonored by a sinful world of both men and women who see it, and groom it, as a target for sexual lust [that's the obvious secret of Victoria's Secret].
2. [The price of feminine beauty is God's more delicate construction of the female body which makes it physically weaker in comparison to the male.] In a sinful world, the strong dominate the weak, and the subjugation of women has had a long and sad history on this sinful planet.

B. The church (which is continually in need of reform) has historically had trouble in its view of women and their bodies.

1. It generally takes on the view in its surrounding culture, instead

of NT thinking (a double-mindedness: saying that the female body is "*fearfully and wonderfully*" made, but really *fearing* its beauty and *wondering* how to keep it submissive to male domination).

2. The revelation of God as *Father*, has blinded Bible teachers from seeing the full implications in Ge 1:27, that both masculinity and femininity are reflections of God's nature.
3. Women's liberation movements have generally *rejected the Bible* or *looked to pagan feminine deities* for religious support. (We've *feared* sounding like we agree with them, but we *failed* by not supporting them with Scriptural truth where they were right.)

TRANS: Both the church and society balk at seeing femininity in the image of God: *society*, because it is spiritually blind; and the *church* because it needs reform. *Maleness* and *femaleness* are rooted in God's nature and both display His nature by their physical and emotional distinctions. The divine construction and equipping of the female in motherhood is a direct reflection of the caring heart of God.

II. God Lets Us Know That Femininity is Part of His Nature

A. God uses metaphors to illustrate what He is like (a *strong tower*; a *rock*; *warrior*). He also uses illustrations with a feminine character (God's Spirit "*hovering*" as a mother bird over the waters in creation; Jesus saying over Jerusalem, "how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings,")

B. **More Than a Divine Midwife, re-read v.7-9**

1. God not only created the process of pregnancy and birth, but He superintends and is the active force behind labor and birth [My RN job in L&D is one of the best jobs in the world, not just because pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding are some of the most beautiful states of humanity that the eyes can witness, but because God is the committed Attendant during labor and is actively present at every birth.]
2. God is into physical human birth, but He's especially excited about spiritual new birth. (Whoever says that God doesn't know what labor is like... is wrong! The Holy Spirit has been through as many labors and deliveries as there are Christians, and He shares those labor pains with his servants, like Paul, who wrote in Gal 4:19, "My dear children ... I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you")

C. What Women's Breasts Were Made For, re-read v.10-11

1. Breastfeeding is beautiful, but society, including the church, sees breasts as sexual attractions, which dishonors their real purpose. In a study on the relation of bras to breast cancer, a medical anthropologist wrote with great insight: "When a woman learns to treat her breasts as objects that enhance appearance, they belong not to the woman, but to her viewers. Thus, a woman becomes alienated from her own body. This doesn't mean that we should no longer view breasts as being beautiful. But we should realize that this viewpoint is a reflection of society's distorted perspective."]
2. Common sense and science both say that breasts are designed for nursing babies. They identify women with their potential for nurturing motherhood. AND that's the most obvious part of the woman's body that reflects image of the nurturing God.
 - a. The source of the milk is from the living blood of the mother
 - b. Their location is close to the heart and the arms for cuddling.

D. The Metaphor of Mother Comfort, re-read v.12-13

1. An infant needs the comfort of touch and cuddling to survive [some cultures keep infants wrapped always close to the bosom, and infants can nurse anytime they please while the woman goes about her daily work.]
2. One little boy, when asked what he liked about his mother, said, "She's soft." There's a tender comfort in God that is reflected in the very softness and delicateness of the woman's body (God's image.)
3. [Maternal bonding is a medical discovery of what God originally created: my poem about it: A womb of warmth, then mother's mirth / And cuddling love to follow birth / Fulfil the bond of special grace /That nourishes the human race.]

CONCLUSION:

--Praise God for womanhood, created in His divine image. Praise Him for **motherhood, which comes directly from His caring heart.**

--I wish that everyone could look at the human body and be led to see reflected in it the glory of its Maker. Ultimately that is what we must do with our attention to mothers. Motherhood, as part of the female image of God, is meant to show His care for us, His children. [a woman came to Jesus directly praising the physical anatomy of His mother, saying "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts at which You nursed." Jesus answered, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God, and observe it."] The purpose of motherhood is children. The purpose in the mothering heart of God is healthy born-again children, well-nourished on the Word and thriving in His care and comfort.

Isa 66:7-13 (NIV) "Before she goes into labor, she gives birth; before the pains come upon her, she delivers a son. {8} Who has ever heard of such a thing? Who has ever seen such things? Can a country be born in a day or a nation be brought forth in a moment? Yet no sooner is Zion in labor than she gives birth to her children. {9} Do I bring to the moment of birth and not give delivery?" says the LORD. "Do I close up the womb when I bring to delivery?" says your God. {10} "Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice greatly with her, all you who mourn over her. {11} For you will nurse and be satisfied at her comforting breasts; you will drink deeply and delight in her overflowing abundance." {12} For this is what the LORD says: "I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream; you will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees. {13} As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem."