

GOD OF COMPASSION*

Compassion is the aspect of God's love that shows His heart of pity "reaching down" to the miserable.

| SCRIPTURE† | MUSIC‡ |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 Samuel 7 Psalm 103 Psalm 112:1-4 Psalm 145:8-10 Isaiah 49:15-16 Matthew 7:7-12 John 14 Romans 8 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; 6:18 Ephesians 1 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 | And Can It Be Before the Throne of God Above Chosen as His Children Come, Lonely Heart Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy Come to the Water (Schrader) SATB Compassion Hymn (Getty) Solo How Can It Be How Deep the Father's Love for Us Hymn of Mercy (Forrest) SATB / Solo Lord of the Small (Forrest) SATB / Solo My Jesus, I Love Thee O How He Loves You and Me Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven The King of Love My Shepherd Is There's A Wideness in God's Mercy (Purifoy) |



* Theme can correspond to **Valentine's Day** or **Mother's Day**.

† Daily preparatory readings shown in **bold**.

‡ Published choral and vocal music shown in **bold**.



NORTHWEST VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

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PRESENTING & PROMOTING THIS THEME

DO MOTHERS FORGET THEIR CHILDREN? (MOTHER'S DAY)

How many mothers have ever forgotten their children? Mothers can and do forget their children – even a nursing baby can be forgotten! – but God will never forget us. In His compassion, He remembers us and treats us lovingly. He has graven us on the palms of His hands.

Promotional Post: [Social media post]

[Insert preparatory Scripture readings.]

On Mother's Day, many of us reflect on special things about our moms or memories that we have made with our families. For those of us who are moms ourselves, we may be blessed with a meal we don't have to cook or a heartfelt thank-you from our children. But even as we honor our moms today, we recognize that no mother is perfect. Those of us who are moms would admit that there are lots of "mom failures" as we teach and guide our children.

Just as one example of our human imperfections, think of how many mothers have forgotten their children. There's the mom who promises to do something special with her child, only to forget until long after that little one is asleep at night. There are many moms who experience a surge of panic when they realize that they don't know where their children are or what they are doing in a given moment. Recently I heard about a mom who experienced this feeling of panic, only to realize that she was actually feeding her nursing baby at that moment! And sometimes a mom might even physically forget her child and leave him behind somewhere. When I was growing up, I used to listen to stories about one of my mom's aunts who had six children and occasionally had trouble keeping track of them all. Once the baby was briefly forgotten on a picnic table in a park; another time a child was left behind at a rest stop during a road trip. My favorite story to hear was the one of my mom's cousin falling asleep in the pew at church, only to be forgotten by his parents, who had to call the pastor and ask him to unlock the church when they realized that they had left their son inside! Even caring mothers can have times of distraction and forgetfulness towards their children.

In Isaiah 49, God uses a comparison to a mother to reveal a truth about Himself. God says to His chosen people, "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. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands." Although the Israelites had been sent into exile, God assures them that He has not forgotten them, and He uses an example to which we can relate – the love and compassion of a mother. Yes, mothers are imperfect, sometimes forgetful, but mothers have a natural love for their children. Imagine, then, God's supernatural love for His children. His compassion exceeds that of a nursing mother for her baby, and His remembrance of His

people is perfect. As we remember our mothers today, let's also be reminded to rejoice in God's great compassion. He cares for us, and He will never forget us. (Amy Tilson)

UNRETURNED LOVE (MOTHER'S DAY)

*(Interview/talk to church member Jackie Hilsabeck, who had a developmentally delayed child.)
A mother loves her child, even when the child is developmentally unable to love her back or to express that love. God loves us in spite of having perfect knowledge of the fact that we will not return His love at times, even though we are capable of loving Him. He has great compassion on His children.*

Promotional Post: [Social media post]

[Insert preparatory Scripture readings.]

The purpose of Mother's Day is to show appreciation for mothers, and today, many children and grown children will do just that. There are many different ways that little children show their appreciation. We moms treasure the drawings and cards, the crafts, the bouquets of flowers picked from the yard, and the carefully prepared breakfasts. Perhaps more than anything else, though, we delight in hearing our children say that they love us.

But what if your child was unable to tell you that she loved you – ever? Recently I had the opportunity to talk to Jackie Hilsabeck in our church, and she shared with me some of her experiences as a mom of a special needs child. When Jackie's daughter Alice was just an infant, she stopped responding normally to her family, and her development from that point on was severely delayed. Alice would later be diagnosed with autism, but at the time, doctors didn't know much about autism or how to help her. So Jackie trusted God to give her the wisdom she needed to help her daughter. Although Alice would often violently hit her mother, Jackie sought to respond to her outbursts with love and patience. Alice had an attention span of just a few seconds and didn't make eye contact with anyone until she was 7 years old, but Jackie found ways to teach her important skills, and she has never stopped loving her. As I spoke with Jackie, I was struck by the great love and compassion she has for her child, knowing that Alice would likely not be able to reciprocate that love until they are both in heaven someday.

God gives grace to many moms like Jackie, enabling them to love children who are unable to love them back. But this love, as great as it is, is only a dim reflection of God's amazing love for His children. God loves us knowing full well that we will not return His love at times, not because we are incapable of doing so, but because we willfully turn away from Him. In the book of Deuteronomy, God warned the Israelites that one day they would break His covenant and He would send them into captivity as a punishment. He knew that they would worship false gods in the Promised Land, that they would disobey His commandments and foolishly, stubbornly

choose whatever they thought was right. Yet His promised response to them was this: “I will have compassion on you.” When His people returned to Him, God would restore them. He would bring them back home. He would never stop loving them.

Today we honor mothers and thank God for their love and compassion, but we worship God Himself for His perfect love for us. Even though we fall short often in our love for Him, praise God, His compassions fail not! (Amy Tilson)

RUTH (VALENTINE'S DAY)

God's compassion is actually an aspect of His love. It is the part of His love that moves Him to pity for our miserable condition; it shows us His heart for us. In Bible times, marriage to a widow was often a form of charity on the part of the groom. The story of Boaz and Ruth is a beautiful picture of God's compassion on us. Ruth was a foreigner, destitute, and without a husband. But Boaz pities her, admires her, and chooses to love and marry her. God's compassion is like Boaz's toward Ruth: His love brings us from a miserable condition into the safety of a covenant relationship.

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Ruth, a young Moabite woman, married an Israelite man named Mahlon who was sojourning in her land. After ten years, he, along with his brother, died and left her alone with her mother-in-law, Naomi and sister-in-law, Orpah. Naomi's husband had died before Ruth's marriage. Having nothing left in Moab, Naomi decided to return Israel. She told her daughters-in-law to go back to their families and stay in their own land. Orpah turned back, but Ruth refused. Ruth had accepted the God of Israel as her own God and knew that He wanted her to stay with Naomi and care for her.

After returning to Bethlehem, Ruth determined to support Naomi and find food for them both. She went out to the fields to glean. The law allowed for poor people to come behind the hired reapers and gather what was missed. She was in a new place and knew nothing of who owned the field, but “happened” upon the field of Boaz. Boaz was a rich man who also “happened” to be a relative of Naomi's dead husband. Boaz treated her kindly and had compassion on her. He had been told of her faith in God and devotion to her mother-in-law. Boaz invited Ruth to join the meal with his servants, and he offered her continued provision by telling her to stay with his workers until the harvest was over.

At the end of her day's labor, Ruth took the barley she had gleaned home to Naomi and told of how the Lord had provided. Naomi remembered that Boaz was a relative of her husband's. Throughout the barley harvest and the wheat harvest, Ruth continued to gather grain during the day in the fields of Boaz to support herself and Naomi.

When the harvest was over, Naomi devised a plan for their future security. Following her mother-in-law's advice, Ruth went to where Boaz and his servants were threshing the wheat and waited until dark. Then, after everyone had fallen asleep, she went to where Boaz slept and laid by his feet. When he woke in the night, he was startled to find a woman there. She spoke and asked him to spread his covering over her. She meant by this to marry her and provide for her as the law allowed. Boaz's response was humble and he acted as though he was the one privileged for her to choose him. Although he was not the closest relative, he arranged the matter the very next day with the man who was closer and declared his intentions before the elders and all the people at the gate. Soon after, he and Ruth were married, and the Lord blessed them with a child.

In this story, we see a parallel between Boaz and Ruth and God's compassionate love toward us. Compassion is not arrogant. Boaz is Ruth's superior because of his position in life and his nationality, but there is no arrogance in him. He is gentle and humble towards Ruth. Ruth was a foreigner, destitute, and without a husband, but Boaz pitied her, admired her, and chose to love and marry her. When God shows love, it is always compassionate because of Who He is and what we are. God is willing to come down and reach us. He truly delights in loving us and us loving Him. God's compassion is like Boaz's toward Ruth: His love brings us from a miserable condition into the safety of a covenant relationship. (Jillian Waycaster)

Promotional Post: Valentine's Day is on Sunday this year. But in worship this Sunday, we will hone in on a particular aspect of God's Love: His compassion. Scripture ties God's compassion to the most sacred of all human covenants, marriage. These passages can help you prepare for worship:

[Insert preparatory Scripture readings.]