

## **INSCRIBED ON THE PALMS OF HIS HANDS**

Isaiah 49: 13-16 –Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Funeral Message For Nellie Shiflett

Rock Springs Evangelical Free Church

Saturday Morning, 10:30 AM

As I pondered Nellie's life lived out so many years in the northern Rocky Mountains, I looked at a map of Montana to see where her roots were, just west of Glacier National Park. I know she would tell you that though she came from the heart of beautiful mountains known as the Whitefish Range and Swan Range, surrounded by Flathead National Forest, Kootenai National Forest, and the Great Bear Wilderness Area, she's now gone Home to a place far more beautiful and glorious. Actually, by coming to live near Bev and Larry here in Rock Springs, Nellie came to live in a place similar to where she was born and raised for her first 15 years. She was born in Haxby, a small place in northwestern Montana, that you can't find easily on a map, just south of Fort Peck Reservoir. Nellie's birthplace is not under water, but it is south of where the water is backed up. The place Nellie has gone Home to in Glory looks different from Haxby, Eureka or Kalispell, Montana or Rock Springs, Wyoming. Revelation 22: 1,2 declares, "And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street and on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

Back in 698 BC, Isaiah inscribed the words of our text. It reminds me of the words of Paul in I Thessalonians 5: 13 where he says, "We sorrow, but not as those who have no hope." We grieve today, but we have a spring in our step, because we know Nellie has gone ahead of us. We are soon going to the same City where the roses never fade. Today, this funeral message is all about finding balance and perspective in our grief over Nellie's Homegoing. We need to cry as Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus, in John 11: 35. Even though Jesus knew moments later, He would raise Lazarus from death to life, He wept. Weeping is our portion when our loved ones die. When we are believers, and they are believers, the scene we see on earth is not the final word. I was at Nellie's side not many minutes after she went Home to the Lord. I was there when the funeral home director came and took her body away. There were tears. A couple days before Nellie died, I lost composure as I was singing, "Come Home, Come Home, It's Supper Time" to Nellie. Death is an enemy, but for believers, death only opens the door for us to

shed this earthly tent that is afflicted and sick and sad and full of pain and sorrow. Death is deadly. It separates our souls and spirits from our flesh, but as clearly as it separates us from our loved ones on earth, it is not the last word. Death only means our earthly prelude is finished. Death cannot separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

God's word of comfort to us from Isaiah today is a three-fold perspective to give us balance in the face of our grief. As I share these truths with you as family and friends, remember God's Word is eternally settled in heaven. What are these three truths God wants to give to us to comfort us in this time of sorrow?

### **THE LORD DESIRES TO COMFORT HIS AFFLICTED PEOPLE.**

(I.) Our text in Isaiah 49: 13 declares, "Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth! Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains! For the Lord has comforted His people, And will have compassion on His afflicted." Do you know what the Hebrew word for afflicted is? It is **aniy**, and it sounds like Nellie's mother's original name of Anni. The Hebrew word for **aniy** has many meanings including, depressed, oppressed, weak, poor and needy, defenseless, lowly, troubled, looking down, or brow-beaten. When death comes in any of our families, one or more of these attacks come to our souls and spirits. But our text tells us God comforts His people and has compassion on His afflicted. The Hebrew word for comfort is **nacham**. Nacham means to breathe strongly, and be sorry, to pity, and to console. We all know the feeling we give out when we pick up an injured child and say, "Oh, I'm so sorry. Let Daddy or Mommy kiss it." The word for compassion sounds almost the same as nacham. It is **racham**. Racham means to pick up in your arms and hold close to your heart. Bev and Keith, reach out to Jesus and to His everlasting arms today. Hear Him say, "Oh, and feel Him take you to His bosom. Relax in the Lord's embrace today. Beloved, God wants to do the same with all of us. His heart is big enough to feel the infirmity of us all. His arms are big enough to hold us all, if we come to Him as His children. If you don't know Jesus today, His heart is open to receive you if you'll only repent, believe and receive Him. His arms are open wide to forgive you and give you eternal life. In an old children's hymn, "Savior, Like A Shepherd Lead Us," in verse 3, Dorothy Thrupp wrote, "Thou has promised to receive us, Poor and sinful tho' we be; Thou has mercy to relieve us, Grace to cleanse and pow'r to free; Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, Early let us turn to Thee; Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, early let us turn to Thee." The Lord desires to comfort His afflicted people. 2ndly,

**THE LORD KNOWS ABOUT THE TIMES WHEN WE FEEL LIKE WE ARE FORSAKEN AND FORGOTTEN.** (II.) Our text in Isaiah 49:

14 reads, “But Zion said, “The Lord has forsaken me, And the Lord has forgotten me.” Lots of times at funerals we have tried to comfort grieving people. To the grieving like Bev and Larry, Keith, and Kevin, Dave and Ken, and Art and Jean, we have said, “I know how you feel.” But do we really know what you are feeling? Oh yes, like me, many of you have lost your Dad and Mom, aunts and uncles. Yet something inside each of us often wonders, “Does anyone really know how forsaken and forgotten I feel?”

Zion or Israel in 698 BC, had these thoughts on their corporate mind. They said, “The Lord has forsaken me.” The Hebrew word for forsaken is **azab**. This word azab means to abandon, to leave behind, or to forsake. What does the Lord know about such feelings? When Jesus was dying for us on the cross, paying the price of our wickedness and sins, He cried out with a loud voice to His Father in Matthew 27: 46, “Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani,” which means, “My God, My God, Why hast Thou Forsaken Me? God our Father precisely forsook Jesus as He bore our sins on the cross, so Jesus could atone for our sins, and so we would never be totally forsaken as Jesus was. We may feel forsaken, but the promise of the Lord to us in Hebrews 13: 5 is still true, “I will never leave you, desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.” No one understands like Jesus.

Zion also cried out, “My Lord has forgotten me.” The Hebrew word for forgotten is **shawkeach**. This word means for others to be oblivious to us, to forget us, or not to be on another’s mind. Beloved, it is true we have been known to forget our spouse’s birthday. David wrote Psalm 139: 17, 18 which says, “How precious also are Thy thoughts to me, O God. How vast is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand. When I awake, I am still with Thee.” When Nellie was lying for a week, much of it in a coma, God never said, “Okay, so much for you, Nellie. I’ll concentrate on helping others.” No, we are told that in a dying person, the last sense to leave is hearing. I am confident Nellie heard our prayers. I am confident God was ever speaking to her by His Spirit. Never say, “God doesn’t understand, or that He forgets us or forsakes us.” Oh, beloved, God understands. Oswald Smith, many years ago, wrote a song in 1937 called “God Understands.” The first two verses say, “God understands your sorrow, He sees the falling tear. And whispers, “I am with thee, Then falter not, nor fear. God understands your heartache, He knows the bitter pain; O trust Him in the darkness, You cannot trust in vain.” Listen as I sing to you

the last verse and chorus. “God understands your weakness, He knows the tempter’s pow’r; And He will walk beside you, However dark the hour. He understands your longing, Your deepest grief he shares, Then let Him bear your burden, He understands and cares.” **THE LORD DESIRES TO COMFORT HIS AFFLICTED PEOPLE. (I.) THE LORD KNOWS ABOUT THE TIMES WHEN WE FEEL LIKE WE ARE FORSAKEN AND FORGOTTEN. (II.)** Thirdly and lastly,

**THE LORD HAS INSCRIBED AND ENGRAVED HIS PEOPLE, WHO BELIEVE IN HIM, UPON THE PALMS OF HIS HANDS. (III.)**

We read the awesome words in our text in Isaiah 49: 15, 16, “Can a woman forget her nursing child, And have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands. Your walls are continually before Me.” Even when Nellie couldn’t swallow a drop of water or eat a spoon of food, God’s hands were eternal evidence He never forgot her. It just meant that it was almost graduation day for Nellie. So you ask me, “How do you know God had Nellie inscribed on the palms of His hands?” We read in Luke 24: 29-31 about a time after Jesus rose from the grave that He joined two people walking home from Jerusalem to Emmaus. The distance was seven miles. When they got home, either Cleopas and his wife, or Cleopas and a fellow disciple, they urged Jesus to turn in for the night, for it was getting dark. They went inside and sat down to have supper. Jesus took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. We read, “And their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.” They saw the imprint of the nails in Jesus’ hands. Later that night those two disciples traveled back to Jerusalem seven miles to relate their experiences to the 11 disciples gathered together. While they were relating the story, Jesus Himself stood in their midst. He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”

Jesus stands here today, telling us, (1) (2) and (3). He wants to comfort us in our affliction. He hasn’t forsaken or forgotten us. No, rather, Jesus has engraved us on His wounded hands and feet. Jesus’ hands and feet tell the story of our redemption. He saved Nellie, He has saved me, He has saved many of you, and He will save you too. Let’s pray. Bow your heads. Now the Lord comfort each of your hearts in Nellie’s passing and Homegoing until the Day dawns and these shadows flee away. Amen.