

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, July 6, 2021
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“A No and a Yes”

READING: Isaiah 49:13-16 – 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...”

A couple of Sundays ago we sang the song, “On Eagles’ Wings.” It has the line, “He will hold you in the palm of his hand.” I was going to base my devotion today on the Bible passage from which that line was taken. I was going to talk about the comfort of that line since anything we hold in the palm of our hands is in the most secure place it can be. It’s not on the fingertips. It’s not between thumb and forefinger. It’s in the palm where it is surrounded by the hand and thus protected and secure. I was going to do that, but guess what? There is no such passage in the Scriptures! I even got out my trusty “Strong’s Concordance” thinking maybe it was translated that way only in the King James Version, but, no, it’s not in there!

I am a bit disappointed for I have always loved that song and in particular that line. I love the thought of God holding me tightly and firmly in his palm, safe from the edges and thus safe from falling. I am a bit chagrined to discover that the author of those lines is the one who utters them and not my Lord.

But all is not lost for in searching for one passage, I found another that gives me even more reason to rejoice and to feel secure in God’s love. The passage is the one I just read from Isaiah 49. Here the Lord himself speaks this line, “See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands...” Do you hear what I hear there? Do you see the beauty of that pronouncement? Do you see the prophetic nature of those words? Better than being held in the palm of his hand, our names are carved into the palms of the one who created us, redeemed us, and continually sanctifies us. And, when and how was that engraving done?

As soon as I read that line my mind went immediately to Calvary and then to the Upper Room where Jesus showed them his hands and said, “See, it is I myself.” You and I have been engraved on the hands of the Savior in a most deliberate and marvelous way. Those nail marks are Jesus’ trophies and emblems of his abiding love for us, his people. When Isaiah wrote those words, he was framing a promise that reached its fulfillment the moment those nails were driven through flesh and bone to suspend the Lord of heaven on a Roman cross. When Jesus visited the Disciples on Easter evening, he displayed his palms as a sign of his identity and as a visible statement of his sacrifice on their behalf.

Frequently these days, boyfriends and husbands will have the names of their sweethearts tattooed on their arms or chests as a sign of their devotion and as a promise of their “eternal” love for that one. Fairly frequently, doctors or tattoo artists make money removing or obscuring those tattoos when the “eternal” love has been extinguished. That’s sadly the way of the world. But not so in Jesus’ case! His “engraving” of our names upon his hands was etched in blood and secured by an empty tomb. Those marks will be there forever. We will see them with our own eyes, and we will stand in awe of what they signify. We will worship him in joy and thanksgiving again and again.

So I got a great big “NO” looking for the line from a hymn, but in the process was led to a passage in the Old Testament that once again found its completion in the New Testament. The engraving of our names upon God’s palms is testimony of His eternal “YES” in Christ Jesus. Any time we find ourselves in doubt of God’s

caring and attention, we need only glance upon the hands of Christ to be reminded just how much he loves us. Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S): ??