

ISAIAH 43 V 1-7 ST. MARTIN'S 10 June 18

*Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name, you are mine.* (Isaiah 43 v 1)

*Do not fear, for I am with you;.....* (Isaiah 43 v 5)

*Do not fear, for I am with you,  
do not be afraid, for I am your God* (Isaiah 41 v 10)

According to good old Google there are 366 “fear not” verses in the Bible - one for each day of the year, including one for leap year. Our list of fears seems endless:

Do you have a fear? There's a fear of Spiders, growing old, your knees, there's homilophobia a fear of sermons, there's a fear for nearly everything.

When I was a teenager, I used to put up the flag at the top of our church tower, and I used to sit with my legs over the edge as I watched the world go by, no health and safety rules then. Now I have an odd fear of heights. A few years back I went up the CN tower in Toronto, and when we went in the revolving restaurant I sat on the nearside leaning even further towards the middle. Did I think that if something happened I would be a lot safer there. We then went up another 2 levels where there is a glass floor which I thought was great and walked all over it, no fear at all there, now I don't even like going up a set of ladders. Fear can sometimes be illogical!

And if you suffer from phobophobia, then it's a fear of fears,

Twice in our reading from Isaiah we hear the words *Do not fear*, in verse 1 and verse 5.

Fear not! Do not be afraid! These are the direct commands you'll find in the passage this morning, and they are its theme of the reading: fear not.

But why were these words addressed to God's people. Why did God need to say these words to them? What reason did they have to be afraid?

The reason is given at the end of chapter 42. God was full of sorrow, as the people of Israel had fallen into spiritual decay. They had been in exile in foreign lands.

Yet, he tells them, *do not be afraid, for I am with you*. (Verse 5 & 6) He promises that he will again gather his people, verse 5 *I will bring your offspring from the east and from the west I will gather you. I will say to the north, 'Give them up!'*

*and to the south, 'Do not withhold.' Bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth.*

So God reassures his people. For a time they will suffer his punishment. They will face some terrible situations. But God will not abandon them. Verse 2, *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.*

God says that despite the peoples spiritual failure, he will show them mercy, bring them back from captivity, and restore them. He would give them an outpouring of love, not wrath. This doesn't only apply to them, it applies to us. Whenever we are going through times of trial, feel spiritually lost, or can't see where God is in our lives. He will call us back, for He created us and loves us unconditionally. He knows the future plans he has for us.

Last week Gary preached from Jeremiah 29 verses 11 & 12 <sup>11</sup> *For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you",*

Because of Gods promises, you don't have to be afraid anymore. God says I'm not going to abandon you, not even to your sin. In our passage for today, God promises to comfort His people who fear they've been abandoned.

verse 2 says *"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; .....*".

Going through the rivers of difficulty will either force you to drown or to grow stronger. If you go in your own strength, you are more likely to drown. If you invite the Lord to go with you, he will protect you. The choice is yours, you can leave God at the door as you leave here this morning, or walk with Jesus as you journey through life this week.

Proverbs 3 verse 5 *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight".* You have nothing to fear, when God is with you.

In the passage from Isaiah, God gives his people a number of grounds to support his promise. He gives them concrete truths to build their faith on; solid reasons not to be fearful. And they all unpack the statement at the end of verse 1, *you are mine.*

God is the calling by name. *“Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made,”* verse 7.

Being “called (or summoned) by name” can mean that you have been “chosen” or called to serve in a special way. Again Gary spoke about being called several weeks ago. When God invites you to join Him in His work, it can be fulfilling, energizing. It can bring you a sense of purpose, again the choice is yours, are you going to accept Jesus in everything you do, or just when it's convenient to you?

The God who created the universe is seeking my presence, your presence, daily, not just Sunday's.

It's completely about God pursuing us and our presence. He's calling us to the honour of enjoying His presence while He enjoys being with us!

Perhaps the best summary of all of this is the famous passage in Romans chapter 8. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ... For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Do not be afraid, for I am with you, God says.

God never promises us an easy, comfortable or pain-free life in this world. This world is a harsh place to live in and there are many things we may fear. The Christian does not escape disease or accident or pain, or loss, and some of us could be experiencing times of trial right now, while for others there could be terrible times ahead in future.

James 1 verse 2, *"Whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, so that you may be mature and complete"*.

God never promises to spare us any of this pain. But, in Jesus, he does promise not to abandon us. Do not be afraid, for I am with you.

And, ultimately, as for the people of Israel in exile, God's promise to us is that he will re-gather us. Even as we face death, the ultimate fear, if we are in Jesus

then we know that it is simply the process of being gathered back to God.  
There is nothing to fear, even from death.

Mark 3 verse 35 "*Whoever does the will of GFod, is my brother and sister and mother*".

Let us go out from here this morning and live out our faith.

*Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;*

*I have called you by name, you are mine.*(Isaiah 43 v 1)

Amen