

Sermon followed by Service

April 30, 2023

Isaiah 43:1-7

You've felt it, haven't you? That sick-inside feeling, that on-the-edge feeling, that stomach-churning, chest-tightening, hard-to-breath feeling that something is going to go wrong.

You've felt it, haven't you? And we don't just feel it, we know it, - something is going to go wrong. This year I raised our medical insurance deductibles; now I have three new doctors. Every time I get something fixed with the house, something bigger breaks. Every time I make a big financial move, the market tanks. Every time I look at the big family vacation picture, what do I see? Someone is missing. What do I know? Some day - maybe it's happening already - the family cancers will catch me, the family diabetes will stick me, the family Alzheimers will mess with my brain and leave me a fumbling, bumbling mess. Or maybe first, the angels will come and take my Lisa home, and leave me a fumbling, bumbling mess. Something bad is going to happen. Some days I feel it; every day, I know it.

In our lesson, the people Isaiah was writing to, they had it worse. They didn't just have a feeling that something bad was going to happen, they were already living it. They didn't just have a feeling, God had told them that trouble was coming - the Babylonians were coming. They didn't just have a recession or a depression or a stock market crash to look forward to; already the Assyrians (modern day Iraq) were bleeding the country dry

demanding tribute money - pay up or get beaten up; and soon the Babylonians would come and take everything that was left. They didn't just have houses that would crack and crumble, their cities and towns were already war-torn by the Assyrians, and soon they would be crumbled and crushed by the Babylonians. They didn't just have the joys of aging to look forward to, the time was coming when their children and grandchildren would be ripped from their homes and taken hundreds of miles away into captivity.

So what did Isaiah's people do? Some plugged their ears: "Don't trouble me with the truth; It'll all be fine and I'll be fine." Others were too tired to plug their ears: "It is what it is, and there's nothing we can do about it." Others figured: "It's everybody for themselves" and the bullies bullied, the cheaters cheated, the scammers scammed, and the rich and powerful had their way, until someone more powerful came along. Sounds familiar, doesn't it? But some looked up to God.

In our lesson, God speaks to them and whoever else would listen. And what does God say? First Isaiah reminds his people who God is - **"This is what the LORD says— he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel."** When trouble hits you, God isn't just some impersonal force of justice, some impersonal force of karma, working justice with no heart. And God isn't just some dis-interested bystander, standing by and watching, but not really caring; or some spectator at a martial arts cage match cheering and calling for blood. No, God had created Jacob and formed Israel. He had brought the Jewish people into being; they were somebody because God made them somebody.

He knows how his people are hurting, and he knows the hurt that is still coming their way. And what does he say to them?

What could he say to them? To the bullies and the cheaters, to those plugging their ears and those too tired to plug their ears, even to those looking to him, God could say: “You have it coming.” And they did have it coming, all of them, even the beaten down and beaten up, even those looking up to him. All of them, like all of us, had shut their ears to God, rejecting God’s way to go their own way, rejecting God’s thing to do their own thing. God could have told them: “All the trouble that’s coming your way, you have it coming, I’m sending it your way, and it’s only a taste of the judgment you deserve.” Again and again that’s the message God had for Isaiah to tell his people. In fact, in the chapter right before our lesson, that’s what God had just told his people. But now, God has something else to say to those who will listen.

And what did he say” **“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.”**

Oh, I love to hear that. All by myself, I can know trouble is coming, and feel trouble is coming, and know that I have it coming. But Isaiah tells me what I can’t know or feel by myself. God says to me and he says to you: **“Fear not, for I have**

redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.” When trouble hits, I don’t need to be afraid; you don’t need to be afraid.

When I hear Isaiah tell me that, I wonder: “How can I know that’s for me? I’m not Jacob or Israel; I don’t have the blood of Jacob and Israel.” But here, in his Word, God called you to be his. Here, in baptism, God put his name on you; he adopted you as his. God’s promise here to Jacob, to Israel, is God’s promise to you.

So when you have that sick feeling inside that something bad is going to happen, when you just know that something bad is going to happen, when you’re already in trouble and you just know it’s going to get worse, remember what the LORD who created you and formed you and got you this far says to you: **“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.”** Think of Israel going through the Red Sea; think of the three Men in the Fiery Furnace. When life is hot against you; when trouble is up to here [your neck] and deep to drown you,

with the LORD you don't have to be alone; with the LORD you won't be alone. You have God to hold you as his.

This is how much you mean to him: **“I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you, and people in exchange for your life.”** What's that about? We might think of when God delivered Israel from Egypt at the expense of Egypt. Or like God and Isaiah we can look ahead from our lesson to the time when God's people are held captive in Babylon and the Persian Cyrus the Great frees God's people at much the same time he goes after the Egyptians. I wish I knew more of that history and how it fits here. But even better is how God gave his Son Jesus in exchange for you and for me. Instead of judging you and me guilty; he judged Jesus as guilty. Instead of holding you and me for punishment; God satisfied justice with Jesus nailed to the cross, so he can hold you and me as forgiven. We don't have to live waiting for the shoe to drop; we don't have to live with that sick feeling wondering when God will strike us. With Jesus, you get to hear: **“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.”**

“I will be with you.” Do you ever feel too far away from God for that to be true? Do you have someone - family or friend

- who feels too far from God? Listen to what God says to you: **“Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth— everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”** If, when you feel far from God, don’t make that God’s judgment on you. Listen to his invitation: “Come to me, return to me, walk with me, follow me.”

And when you feel something is going to go wrong, listen to his promise: **“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.”** Amen.

April 29 & 30, 2023

DIVINE SERVICE II

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ...the headline of the latest issue of *Psychology Today* is The Importance of Hope.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... our Lord gives us the hope we need when we need it the most.

OPENING HYMN

"How Firm a Foundation"

Hymn 800

How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord,
is laid for your faith in his excellent Word!
What more can he say than to you he has said,
to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

"Fear not, I am with you, O be not dismayed,
for I am your God and will still give you aid;
I'll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand,
upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.

"When through the deep waters I call you to go,
the rivers of sorrow shall not overflow,
for I will be with you, your troubles to bless,
and sanctify to you your deepest distress.

"When through fiery trials your pathway shall lie,
my grace all-sufficient shall be your supply;
the flames will not hurt you; I only design
your dross to consume and your gold to refine.

"The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose
I will not, I will not, desert to its foes;
that soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!"

INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

CONFESSION

M: Dear friends, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

C: **Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.**

For faithless worrying and selfish pride,

For sins of habit and sins of choice,

For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,

I deserve to be cast away from your presence forever.

O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.

ABSOLUTION

M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the word of Christ through his called servant: I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

LORD, HAVE MERCY (*Kyrie*)

M: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

For the well-being of all people everywhere, that they may receive from you all they need to sustain body and life, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: For the spread of your life-giving gospel throughout the world, that all who are lost in sin may be brought to faith in you, hear our prayer, O Christ.

C: **Christ, have mercy.**

M: For patience and perseverance in this life, that we may not lose the hope of heaven as we await your return, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: Lord of life, live in us that we may live for you.

C: **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God, our refuge and strength, have mercy on your Church, as we come in prayer before you. Answer us not in judgement on our sins, but in peace and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Isaiah 43:1–7

But now, this is what the LORD says—
he who created you, Jacob,
he who formed you, Israel:
“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.
When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.
For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;
I give Egypt for your ransom,
Cush and Seba in your stead.
Since you are precious and honored in my sight,
and because I love you,
I will give people in exchange for you,
nations in exchange for your life.
Do not be afraid, for I am with you;
I will bring your children from the east
and gather you from the west.
I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’

and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.'
 Bring my sons from afar
 and my daughters from the ends of the earth—
 everyone who is called by my name,
 whom I created for my glory,
 whom I formed and made."

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 107C



1 Give thanks un - to the LORD our God. How
 2 Let God's re - deemed re - peat these words and
 3 He gath - ered them from out the lands, from
 4 Their wea - ry soul with - in them faints when



good and kind is he, whose ten - der mer - cy
 give him thanks and praise who res - cued them from
 north, south, east, and west. They strayed in des - ert's
 thirst and hun - ger press; in trou - ble then they



shall en - dure through all e - ter - ni - ty.
 hos - tile hands, pre - served them all their days.
 path - less way, no cit - y found to rest.
 cried to God; he saved them from dis - tress.

He made the way before them straight, and he became their guide,
 that they might to a city go and there in peace abide.

Let all the children of the LORD now praise him for his grace,
 and for his works of wonder done in ev'ry time and place!

SECOND READING*Ephesians 1:3–14*

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION*2 Timothy 4:18*

Alleluia. The Lord will rescue me from every evil and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. Alleluia.

GOSPEL*John 10:27–30*

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

HYMN OF THE DAY

"He Will Hold Me Fast"

Hymn 813

When I fear my faith will fail, Christ will hold me fast;
when the tempter would prevail, he will hold me fast.
I could never keep my hold thro' life's fearful path,
for my love is often cold— he must hold me fast.
He will hold me fast; he will hold me fast;
for my Savior loves me so, he will hold me fast.

Those he saves are his delight; Christ will hold me fast;
precious in his holy sight, he will hold me fast.
He'll not let my soul be lost; his promises shall last;
bought by him at such a cost, he will hold me fast.
He will hold me fast; he will hold me fast;
for my Savior loves me so, he will hold me fast.

For my life he bled and died; Christ will hold me fast;
justice has been satisfied; he will hold me fast.
Raised with him to endless life, he will hold me fast
till our faith is turned to sight when he comes at last!
He will hold me fast; he will hold me fast;
for my Savior loves me so, he will hold me fast.

SERMON

Isaiah 43:1-7

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate.

He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

EASTER PRAYER

M: O Lord God, our strength, our song, and our salvation, you fulfilled your promises by the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead.

C: Thanks be to God! You give us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

M: In your compassion you sent Christ, the Good Shepherd, who laid down his life to rescue the lost.

C: Drive out all doubt and gloom that we may delight in your glorious triumph.

M: Lift our eyes heavenward to see him who lives to make intercession for the saints, and grant us confidence in the greatness of his power. Keep before us the vision of your redeemed people standing before your throne and singing the song of victory.

C: Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive wisdom and power and honor and glory and praise.

M: Make us instruments of your peace as we bring the good news of hope and new life to those around us. Guide us in the use of all that you have entrusted to us: our time, our talents, and our treasures.

C: Risen Lord, live in us that we may live for you.

M: Merciful Lord Jesus, grant healing to the sick, and strengthen the faith of the suffering and the dying. Assure them of your abiding presence, and comfort them with the hope of eternal life.

Special prayers and intercessions may follow.

M: Hear us, Lord, as we bring you our private petitions.

Silent prayer.

M: Gracious Father, you have restored to us the joy of your salvation. With happy hearts, we come before you and say:

C: **Alleluia! Thanks be to God! Amen.**

THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Gluten-free wafers are available; ask Pastor.)

M: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

M: Lift up your hearts.

C: **We lift them up unto the Lord.**

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: **It is good and right so to do.**

M: It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who rose from the dead in glorious triumph to bring forgiveness to the world and everlasting life to all who believe.

Therefore with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY *Sanctus*

O holy, holy, holy
Lord God of pow'r and might,
Your glory, earth and heaven
In countless ways recite.

Hosanna! Come and save us,
Lord God of hosts on high,
And in your grace and mercy
Receive our fervent cry.

Hosanna in the highest!
How truly blest is he
Who in God's name is coming
To set his people free!
He comes to bring salvation
And with his blood outpoured,
Deliver us from bondage—
Hosanna, mighty Lord!

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

M: Blessed are you, O God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. By his victory over the grave, our Savior declared death's reign ended, the door to heaven open, and the payment for sin complete.

We celebrate with joy the glorious resurrection of your Son.

We marvel at the depth of your love.

We stand in awe of your power.

We are humbled by the compassion you have shown our fallen race.

Lead us to rejoice in the pardon offered and sealed in this Sacrament and to live a life worthy of your name. The Lord Jesus lives! Alleluia.

C: **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my † body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my † blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

M: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: **Amen.**

LAMB OF GOD *Agnus Dei*

Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.
Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God,
you take a - way the sin of the world;
grant us your peace. A - men.

I walk in danger all the way; the thought shall never leave me
that Satan, who has marked his prey, is plotting to deceive me.
This foe with hidden snares may seize me unawares
if e'er I fail to watch and pray; I walk in danger all the way.

I pass through trials all the way, with sin and ills contending;
in patience I must bear each day the cross of God's own sending.
Oft in adversity I know not where to flee,
when storms of woe my soul dismay; I pass through trials all the way.

Grim death pursues me all the way, nowhere I rest securely;
he comes by night, he comes by day, he takes his prey most surely.
A failing breath, and I in death's strong grasp may lie
to face eternity today; grim death pursues me all the way.

I walk with angels all the way, they shield me and befriend me;
all Satan's pow'r is held at bay when heav'nly hosts attend me.
They are my sure defense; all fear and sorrow, hence!
Unharm'd by foes, do what they may, I walk with angels all the way.

I walk with Jesus all the way, his guidance never fails me;
within his wounds I find a stay when Satan's pow'r assails me;
and by his footsteps led, my path I safely tread.
No evil leads my soul astray; I walk with Jesus all the way.

My walk is heav'nward all the way; await, my soul, the morrow,
when you at last with joy can say farewell to sin and sorrow.
All worldly pomp, be gone! To heav'n I now press on.
For all the world I would not stay; my walk is heav'nward all the way.

CLOSING PRAYER

M: We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet that you have given us to eat and to drink in this sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love. By your Spirit help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN

“Lord, You Call Us as Your People”

Hymn 736

Lord, you call us as your people, out of darkness into light.
You created and redeemed us, made us precious in your sight.
Give us faith to trust you boldly and to love you steadfastly.
By your Spirit may we ever faithful to our callings be.

Lord, you call us as disciples, walking on your pilgrim way.
Crucified and risen Savior, you are with us ev’ry day.
Give us wisdom, give us courage as you teach us patiently.
By your Spirit may we ever faithful to our callings be.

Lord, you send us to the harvest in your Great Commission’s call,
reaching out to all the nations, bringing life and hope to all.
Give us boldness and compassion, bless us with your eyes to see.
By your Spirit may we ever faithful to our callings be.

Lord, you call us to new ventures by a pathway yet unknown.
Though we cannot see the ending, we will follow you alone.
Knowing that your hand is guiding and you love us faithfully,
by your Spirit may we ever faithful to our callings be.

Lord, you call us as your people, now in faith we sing your praise:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, alleluias to you raise.
Hold us in your gracious power, blessed Holy Trinity,
that rejoicing we will ever faithful to our callings be.

OFFERING

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