

Fear Not

✦ **I have redeemed you.** (vv.1-2)

✦ **You are safe.** (vv.3-4)

✦ **You are mine.** (vv.5-7)

In the name of Jesus, the soul's best Friend, dearly redeemed:

A few weeks ago in a sister congregation outside Boston, Pastor Thomas Fox gave a children's lesson few of us will ever forget. You could tell he takes their dogs out at night, and that they have owls in their neighborhood. It almost sounded as if we had an owl in the church when he called to the children, "*Who? Who? Who are you?*" The lesson was all about our identity. *Who are you?* Every believer in Jesus can say, "I am a child of God." The lesson must have stuck because the little children left church calling, "*Who? Who? Who are you?*" And that's the Holy Spirit's gift to us today. Through the prophet Isaiah, the LORD says, **Fear Not – I have redeemed you. You are safe. You are mine.**

✦ **I have redeemed you.** (vv.1-2)

There are times when God's people feel the need for this message more than ever. Recall how Isaiah with his lips and heart cleansed by hallowed fire from God's altar, answered the LORD's call, "*Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?*" with his own eager volunteering: "*Here I am. Send me!*" But then Isaiah also asked, "*Lord, how long?*" The answer was shocking: "*Until the cities are a wasteland without a single inhabitant, until the houses are totally deserted, and the farmland is completely devastated,*¹² *until the Lord has removed the people far away, and the abandoned places within the land are many.*¹³ *If there is only a tenth left in it, that too will be burned in its turn. Like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is cut down, so the holy seed is its stump.*" (Isaiah 6:11–13 EHV¹) The culture of God's chosen people would continue to deteriorate until His wrath would descend in the Babylonian Captivity. In the decades of Exile after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Lord's Temple, God's chosen believers would need great encouragement. So do we in these Last Days!

In war, in plague and pandemic, in famine and misfortune, we need the soothing voice of God to say, "*But now this is what the LORD says, the LORD who created you, O Jacob, the LORD who formed you, O Israel. Do not be afraid, because I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are mine.*" *Jacob* and *Israel* are the same man. He started out as the *Heel-grabber* and *Deceiver* known as *Jacob*. But when in faith he wrestled with God and overcame in prayer for God's blessing, the LORD changed his name to *Israel* – *Wrestler* who overcomes God. ***I have redeemed you*** – knowing full well who you are at your worst, and loving you for what I can make of you by faith in Jesus your Redeemer.

"I have called you by name." Our Creator has always wanted an intimate relationship with humans, the crown of His creation. When Adam and Eve sinned, the LORD God called, "*Adam, where are you?*" Then the Savior-God called them to repentance by promising a Deliverer, the Seed of the woman who would crush Satan's head. The LORD God called Abraham by name to be the father of all believers. He told Jeremiah, "*Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born, I set you apart. I appointed you to be a prophet to the nations.*" (Jeremiah 1:5) This close, caring relationship shines on Easter morning when a heartbroken woman thinks the gardener has stolen her Savior's body. With one word the Lord God calls her and calms her fears: ***Mary.***

¹ EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version* (<http://wartburgproject.org>) © 2019. NPH: 800-662-6022, Amazon-Kindle, LOGOS.

“I have redeemed you” – bought you back from sin, death, and hell – with the precious blood of Christ. Dear friends, how can you appreciate the cost if you’re not hearing the Passion of our Lord in Midweek Lenten services? How can you realize what God’s redemption means for you if you only see the “last act” of the Three Acts of our Salvation by attending only Easter morning? The three-act play of God’s grace we call the *Triduum* begins 7:00 pm, Maundy Thursday. Who would say, “I’ll watch the first act, but not the second”? Like, “I’ll go to Maundy Thursday *or* Good Friday – but not both”? Personal refreshment flows in the *Triduum* booklet being printed for you to pick up or download next week – Palm Sunday, or Monday-Wednesday. It’s really one continuous worship service: Maundy Thursday...Good Friday (1:00, 7:00 pm)...Easter Sunday (7:30, 10:00 am). Can’t attend in-person? Praise God for Livestream with recordings on our YouTube Channel (newlifeshoreview). No lottery was ever as rich.

Redeemed from what? Rejection – such heartbreak. Extinction – endless depression...so...

✠ **You are safe.** (vv.3-4)

Do your childhood memories include danger? Not just bad dreams but actual dangerous situations? Is it still vivid in your memory, that small boat with an outboard motor? Can you still hear the breakers on the bar where the ocean meets the bay? **On the waters** is frightening enough, but in the that thick fog when the tide reversed, your anchor stuck. Every attempt of your Dad to pull it lose nearly swamped the boat. As the tide rushes out to sea past the marker buoy, it’s making a deep trough of powerful current. And you can’t help thinking of a classmate who drowned at sea recently. But **safe**....

In the flames? Grandma and your sister couldn’t tell if that was fog coming out of the forest or smoke. But there was no question as you and your brothers tried to beat down the flames with branches as the smoldering pine needles a few feet thick kept flaring up all around you. Fire hoses under those needles had to douse the embers. But you were **safe** even in the flames.

In the rivers? How can you forget wading through that cold mountain stream in your slippery tennis shoes on the rocks as the rushing current keeps tugging at your little legs? How could you have crossed without your father’s reassuring voice? “It’s okay. I’m here. You can do this.” **You are safe.**

In the overwhelming flood of catastrophe on the nation, how could God’s people have survived without God’s reassurances through Isaiah, **“When you cross through the waters, I will be with you. When you cross the rivers, they will not sweep you away. When you walk through fire, you will not be burned, and the flame will not set you on fire. Because I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior....Because you are precious and honored in my eyes, and I myself love you....”**

Remember the three men in the fiery furnace? They were captives who lived on the promises of God through prophets like Isaiah and Daniel who reports: **Shadrak, Meshak, and Abednego answered King Nebuchadnezzar, “We have no need to answer you about this matter. Since our God, whom we serve, does exist, he is able to save us from the blazing fiery furnace. So, he may save us from your hand, Your Majesty. But if he does not, you should know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods, and we will not worship the golden statue that you set up.”...²⁷[Later] the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the royal advisors gathered together and looked at these men. The fire had no power over their bodies. Not a hair on their head was singed, their robes were not damaged, and the smell of fire had not stuck to them.** (3:16–18, 27) No matter what happened to their bodies, their souls were **safe**.

We need physical deliverance. High tides of immorality in America which have always preceded every major conflict from the Revolution to the Civil War to The Great War to End All Wars to WWII to Korea and Vietnam. We need deliverance from flames of discord and destruction in our cities and culture. From sweeping currents of social media. No matter whether vaccine or no vaccine, cancer, heart attack, whatever – this body must die, but your soul lives on forever as you trust in Jesus. His glorious resurrection reassures us more than anything. **“Who? Who? Who are you?” You are safe.** And someday soon your soul will be reunited with your raised and glorified body like Jesus – forever alive!

For *The Preacher’s Apprentice (TPA)* sermon study or copies: m.cordes@comast.net . New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church
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✦ **You are mine.** (vv.5-7)

God's Name on us! ***"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! I have engraved on the palms of my hands."*** (Isaiah 49:15f NIV) **You are mine.**

When one brother in college wanted to date several women, one of them said, "Just date me!" Isn't that a sweet way of saying, **You are mine**? Still happily married today! God does not want you to have your eye on anyone but Him for good and blessing, whether security and safety in your life, or good health and strength to live. All good comes from God. **You are mine**, He says. And twice in the verses that follow our text, the LORD explains what that means. ***"You are my witnesses."*** (43:10,12)

How seriously do God's people take this claim of God on their body, soul and witness? You can go back to Sixteenth Century Holland a few years after Luther died, especially if you think our "Cancel Culture" is something new. The Duke of Alba carried the Spanish Inquisition to the Netherlands against the Protestant Calvinists who wanted to worship Christ alone. Tens of thousands died by torture and burning. Not quite the peaceful view of ice skating rinks and windmills that most of us associate with Holland. But the authorities had a problem. These Protestants kept on preaching Christ-crucified even in the flames. How could they cancel that message of the Gospel if martyrs preached to their dying breath?

One young man named Hans Bret supported his widowed mother by working in a bakery in Antwerp. They were Protestants by faith and conviction. In his spare time Hans studied the Bible and taught new converts in the church, preparing them for baptism. One evening a knock on the bakery door brought Hans to find a delegation of officers. The house was surrounded, and Hans was arrested. For the next several months, authorities alternately questioned and tortured him. From his dark isolation hole, Hans managed to smuggle letters to his mother.

From him alone we expect our strength to withstand these cruel wolves, so that they have no power over our souls. They are really more cruel than wolves—they are not satisfied with our bodies, tearing at them; but they seek to devour and kill our souls.

Hans's treatment worsened, and when intense torture failed to break his spirit, he was sentenced to be burned at the stake. Early on Saturday, **January 4, 1577**, the executioner came to Hans's cell and ordered him to stick out his tongue. Over it he clamped an iron tongue screw, twisting it tightly with a vise grip. Then he took a red-hot iron and seared the end of Hans's tongue so that the tongue would swell and couldn't slip out of the clamp. The officials did not want Hans preaching at his execution. The young man was taken by wagon to the marketplace, secured to a post with winding chains, and burned alive.

In the crowd, another Hans watched in horror – Hans de Ries, Bret's pastor and friend. After the ashes cooled, he sifted through them and retrieved a keepsake – the tongue screw that had fallen from Bret's consumed body. Shortly after, Hans de Ries married Hans Bret's mother, and the tongue screw became a symbol of faithfulness that has passed from generation to generation.²

One generation will praise your deeds to another, and they will declare your mighty acts. I will contemplate the glorious splendor of your majesty and the accounts of your wonderful works. Then they will speak about the power of your awesome works, and I will tell about your great deeds. (Psalm 145:4-6 EHV)

Among God's greatest deeds is the way He takes away our guilt and fear. **Fear Not – I have redeemed you. You are safe. You are mine.** For time and eternity, God's people say, Amen!

² Robert J. Morgan, *On This Day: 365 Amazing and Inspiring Stories about Saints, Martyrs & Heroes (OTD)*. "The Tongue Screw," January 4. Nashville, TN: THOMAS NELSON PUBLISHERS Nashville, 1997. (www.laridian.com)