

One of my favorite hymns that we sing in worship is Isaiah 43. It is almost a direct quote of Isaiah 43:1-3. It is a wonderful passage for us to meditate on during this time where there are so many things to be fearful of.

It is written to the people of God who had a lot to be afraid of. They were sinners under the judgment of the Holy One of Israel. They were in exile, far away from their homes. They lived under foreign rule in Babylon. I am sure that they felt like they were being pummeled by 10 foot waves at the beach and couldn't get out.

And it is in the middle of this that God speaks this word of encouragement and grace to them. He gives them several things to hold onto in the middle of their struggle. First - “I will be with you”. Even in the middle of their crisis - in the middle of our crisis - our greatest hope is that God is with us. He holds our hands and shelters us under his wings like a mother bird. He is with us in the middle of the storm. Second - “I have redeemed you”. Though we are sinners, we are redeemed sinners. He has purchased us with his own blood. Our debt has been paid. We are no longer under sin, but under his grace. And this means - thirdly - that “You are mine.” He proudly calls us his own children - his daughters and sons. There is no greater privilege or possession than to be called his child.

And all of this means that we do not need to be afraid because “the waves will not overcome you.” Whether they are the waves of sickness or job worries or missing friends or loneliness or depression - they will not have the last word. They do not define us. They cannot defeat us. Because we are His.

This social distancing stuff is hard for me. I find myself walking up to people with an outstretched hand or arms for a hug. I find myself picking up my phone to ask someone to lunch. I find myself longing to hang out at the Gateway Center!!! I find myself worrying about all kinds of things. This is my daughter Rebekah's senior year and this virus has cancelled so many of the events and things you do to celebrate and culminate 4 years of work. It is hard not to feel cheated. And I know that some of you are facing things that are much harder than that.

But in the middle of all of it, God is calling us to remember - I will be with you. I have redeemed you; You are mine; the waves will not overcome you.

May the Lord hold us tightly and remind us often of these truths today and in the coming days as we pass through these waters.

**When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you,
And the waves will not
Overcome you.
Do not fear,**

**For I have redeemed you,
I have called you by name,
You are Mine.**

**Chorus: For I am the Lord your God (I am the Lord your God),
I am the Lord your God (I am)
The Holy One of Israel
Your Savior**

**For I am the Lord your God (I am the Lord your God),
I am the Lord your God (I am)
The Holy One of Israel
Your Savior**

I am the Lord (do not fear)

2. When you walk through the fire

You'll not be burned,

And the flames will not

Consume you.

Do not fear,

For I have redeemed you,

I have called you by name,

You are Mine. (Repeat chorus)