

Isaiah 43:1-21

Because Jesus loves you personally you can trust his way, be his witness, and give him praise.

Let's take a poll this morning, by raising hands, how many of you "love humanity?" Like actually love people. Good/most of us. It is actually quite an easy answer, or should be, isn't it? Especially at church, we should be able to say we love people.

But what about specific people? While it is easier to say I have a generic love for humanity, it is far harder to say I love the people I actually know... that I have to be around, that maybe get on my nerves or have differing opinions. Those that I can label more specifically than just "humanity." To love those it takes more effort and I might prefer if they just love me so I don't have to do the work of loving them. *Emotion of love follows behavior of love.*

Because this is our experienced reality, we tend to think this is how God works. That there is a general "humanity love" as a starting point that must be capitalized on or lived up to.

Here in Isaiah we see something else at work that the potential to redefine our thoughts of God - and what living in relationship with him means.

Introduced to the servant of the Lord, who will save with righteousness and as a light to the nations, hopes are dashed a bit in the second half of chapter 42 as Israel is called a failure for missing the promise of God.

Isaiah 42:18 "Hear, you deaf, and look, you blind, that you may see!" (ESV)

Who will listen and hear what is to come? Is it not the Lord against whom you have sinned by staying captive to the idolatry of the day and ignoring God...

You have this beautiful picture of the Messiah - the One promised to save people - and then Judah's inability to fall in line!

But to this terrible news, a humanity incapable of obedience, comes good news of high calibre. And it is that we want to soak in this morning.

One point with three ways of application from the text today.

1) God Loves You Personally

Isaiah 43:1 “But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.” (ESV)

If you walk away with nothing else today I want you to know that this verse is for you, this is God speaking to you in Christ. That he has redeemed you, he has called you by name and you are his. No fear in the love of God for you.

What gives Israel their identity is the love of God and it is not just a generic love from afar, it is intimate, he has formed them, he knows them well enough to call them by name. To know everything about them and still he says “You are mine!”

When we have a tendency to depersonalize the love of God, His word says otherwise making it specific and personal.

Real love is personal. Real love is doing concrete things for concrete individuals. God's love is always real love, so God's love is always personal.

This declaration comes to people experiencing exile like dynamite clearing debris from the only exit of a cave - this word blows open a way of light and hope.

That they would have redemption, restoring value, delivering them into a better situation, reclaiming and reviving them.

Figuring out what it means requires first knowing who is saying it.

“I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.” **v. 3** Using his personal name, Yahweh, he says he is the God they have known all these generations past. The anchor of a people, the center of all of their life, the One who has saved and will save them. Give them place and peace.

“I am the LORD and besides me there is no savior.” **v. 11** There is no other way to life, no other way of eternity or security. He is the exclusive way.

“I am God.” **v. 12**. “Your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.” **v. 15** Personal, mutual belonging between God and his people, he is the creator and reign King over all things.

He can be trusted, there is no higher authority, no truer voice, no more important promise for those he calls.

Knowing who he is, then we need to see why he redeems.

Isaiah 43:4 “Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life.” (ESV)

This is not just poetic flourish this is exposure of the love he has for his people, precious, valued... the One who knows everything about his creation, still sees us as precious.

Honored. This is the place of our dignity, our worth our importance before God.

He redeems because he loves you. Personally, intimately, perfectly. God has loving intentions toward you and uses other people to fulfill them.

Some set of motivations for the work of God to redeem people! “They speak of the value the Lord sees in his people, the dignity (honoured) he has conferred in calling them his, and the love (Dt. 7: 7–8) which undergirds all. This love is part of the unchanging nature of God and thus guarantees the continuing relationship come what may.” - J. Alec Motyer

And he goes on, “You are my witnesses, declares the LORD, and my servant I have chosen that you may know and believe me.” v. 10.

The reason for “But now” is not our repentance but God himself. His choosing, his love.

This week in social media there was a clip making the rounds where a pastor was explaining to a crowd that they were important if they were experiencing difficulty because it proved the devil was scared of them... Isaiah speaks a better word, you are important because God chose you, he loves and honors you, finds you precious in his eyes.

And this is tremendously good because “there is none who can snatch us out of his hand.” v. 13... This is huge, God personally loves, chooses those he saves...

As the Redeemer, taking us on as his responsibility releases his own from every bondage, bruising, or exile they suffer.

Those he has called by name... establishing a direct personal relationship involving a specific plan and place for the one named.

This is a profound reality. And frankly one that can be fairly unsettling to a lot of people. But this personal salvation, this redemption tasted along the way by Israel but ultimately delivered by the promised Servant, is all made ours in Christ.

Ephesians 2:11–13 “Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—[12] remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. [13] But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”(ESV)

Ephesians 2:19 “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, (ESV)

Branches from a wild olive tree grafted into Abraham's tree. So we can and must hear God speaking directly to us in Isaiah 43. "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine." God loves you personally and his love changes everything.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (ESV)

Romans 5:8 "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (ESV)

"The death of Christ is not only the demonstration of God's love (John 3:16), it is also the supreme expression of Christ's own love for all who receive it as their treasure. The early witnesses who suffered most for being Christians were captured by this fact: "Christ loved me and gave himself for me." They took the self-giving act of Christ's sacrifice very personally. They said, "He loved me. He gave himself for me." John Piper

And it is not just being tolerated but treasured by Jesus. You are the prize that was set before him.

So get this... All of the finished work of Jesus was done with you personally in mind. This is not some generic love, but an intimate knowledge, choosing, honoring, loving. And if we get a hold of this truth our world will be upended in the best way possible.

"Jesus has done - and is still doing - so much for us that it is difficult to really believe he did all of it for each one of us personally, because he loves each of us personally. But it's true. And if we want to understand Jesus's work in saving us, then we need to get this clear and keep it clear. When Jesus created the universe; when Jesus guarded, guided, and governed his chosen people for thousands of years; when Jesus "emptied himself" and became a man; when Jesus bore years and years of servitude; when Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate; when Jesus was crucified, dead, and buried; when Jesus descended into hell on the cross; when Jesus rose again from the dead and ascended into heaven; when Jesus sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty, making intercession for us and advocating our cause - all this he did for you, personally. All along, as he did each and every act, he knew you completely and intimately. Each and every thing he did, he did to save you, personally." Greg Forester

Jesus loves you individually. He loved you at your worst and he loves you knowing all the times you're going to blow it in the future.

We need this. Like the life preserver that keeps us from drowning. Like the warmth of the sunrise on a cold morning. Like unstoppable laughter. Like seeing color or hearing sound for the first time. The joy of being fully known and fully loved, personally.

And it has implications in every inch of our lives. In the way we love, the way we work, the way we play.

Because Jesus loves you personally you can trust his way, be his witness, and give him praise.

“Our constant tendency is toward rudderless inconsequentiality, and God is constantly getting us back on course to our true destiny.” RO

And in Isaiah 43 God pulls us out of inconsequential living by his love in three ways.

A) Trusting His Way

God makes a way where there is no way. Fear not.

Isaiah 43:2 “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.” (ESV)

Not only will he deliver his people from exile (which Israel will experience as partial fulfillment of this promise) but he will also draw everyone who is called by his name from every corner of the earth. Nothing will thwart his purpose. And because that's true we can trust him.

We can recognize his will in his word, and we are indwelt with His Spirit to guide us. And we live trusting that he is working for his glory and our good, doing a new thing in and through us.

This is us living in faith in God. “Fear not I am with you.”

Means we can claim all the promises of Jesus, redemption, forgiveness, new life, power, and mission.

B) We Are His Witnesses

Isaiah 43:10 “You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he.” (ESV)

God loves us so that we will be his witnesses, that we would be living proof that he is the only all-sufficient Savior. We then carry the truth of his personal love with us, and we become a people, loved, called and formed for his glory. For the expansion of his kingdom.

Our life together spotlighting the glory of God - through our very human lives for everyone to see. And in the seeing people recognize its what they have been longing for. The very purpose of God for the church.

Luke 24:46–47 Jesus said to his disciples “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, [47] and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations,” (ESV)

We reveal that by living in a community of repentance and forgiveness. Of unity centered on Jesus alone as our Savior and hope. Our destiny is to be a living advertisement of how good God is to people who deserve the opposite.

We can have a tendency to just drift “doing church,” going through the motions and missing our purpose and identity as the loved and called of Christ. Actually living glorifying God and enjoying him forever.

We want to be about that and it has to be ignited by a realization of God’s love for us in Christ. That has us trusting his way, being his witnesses and giving him praise.

C) We Praise

All of the earth will serve God's purpose of redemption. Water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert to refresh his chosen people.

Isaiah 43:21 "the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise. (ESV)

Credit where credit is due. Declaring how the Lord has redeemed us.

This changes when we know that God loves us personally. It is no longer giving God thanks hoping to get something out of it. It is not duty or religiosity. It is not singing to set a mood. But it is seeing the pivotal hinge of our salvation in Jesus's work rather than in our receiving of that work and letting it shape our devotion.

Knowing and living from the truth that nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Because Jesus loves you personally you can trust his way, be his witness, and give him praise.

Life-altering truth.

Those of you that claim Christ, remember his love, his personal love for you. His intimate love for you. Fear not, he has redeemed you, he has called you by name, you are his."

Live like it.

If you have never put your faith in Jesus, that his life, death and resurrection were for you, to bring you to God, blameless, forgiven and hopeful. Today is the day.

And no one will ever love you like this... you can't even love yourself like this. No one loves you like Jesus does. Lean into his love.

Too often we think God must submit to our thinking of him. That he has to behave the way we are most comfortable with. That he has to respond to our striving and scheming. But his word says otherwise. It says that he loves us, personally, that he is our only Savior.

Run to this truth above your own opinion. Cling to it and know you are held in his love by the finished work of Jesus on the cross, for you. Fear not, declare his praise.

1 John 3:1 “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.” (ESV)