

You Are Mine
Isaiah 43:1-7
October 13, 2019

David Robert Haas is an American author and song writer for contemporary Catholic liturgical music. He has written a song called “You Are Mine.” It is a very soothing song. It is based on Isaiah 43. The lyrics state:

I will come to you in the silence
I will lift you from all your fear
You will hear My voice
I claim you as My choice
Be still, and know I am near

I am hope for all who are hopeless
I am eyes for all who long to see
In the shadows of the night,
I will be your light
Come and rest in Me

Do not be afraid, I am with you
I have called you each by name
Come and follow Me
I will bring you home
I love you and you are mine

I am strength for all the despairing
Healing for the ones who dwell in shame
All the blind will see,
The lame will all run free
And all will know My name

Do not be afraid, I am with you
I have called you each by name
Come and follow Me
I will bring you home
I love you and you are mine¹

Isaiah 43 is an oracle of salvation. God gives a word of hope to his people, who were in exile. “Do not be afraid, I am with you...I will bring you home, I love you and you are mine.”

Have you ever watched children choosing their team for a game? It starts with two people, one person from each team. They begin to form their own teams. One person chooses his team member. Then the other person chooses one. It goes back and forth choosing one person at a time until everyone is chosen.

Some children always get chosen first: the taller, stronger, more athletic, more intelligent, more popular. “Should we pick David?” someone asks. “NO! Pick John!” As more names are called and the teams are formed, inevitably there is a small group of children standing off to the side trying to pretend that it doesn't matter. But it does. It matters and it hurts. Rejections and taunting remarks hurt deeply. It hurts to be chosen last, because it has a message that no one wanted you.

Some of those children carry deep scars in their hearts well into adulthood. Without even realizing it, they isolate themselves. “Nobody likes me, so why should I care about them?” Or, “I'm not going to get close to anybody; because I don't want to be rejected.” Some people have deep scars.

I am sure childhood rejection is not the only reason for negative feelings we have about ourselves. We have many other experiences throughout our lives which contribute to our low self-esteem. Each of us can identify with those feelings of helplessness and powerlessness; the feelings of being at the mercy of the whims and choices of other people.

Each time a company downsizes, many skilled workers end up losing their jobs. Some economic policies and regulations force companies to move to another state. As a result, families are separated from their extended families and friends. Even as adults we are at the mercy of other people's choices and decisions.

The passage we have read this morning is the word given to the Israelites living in exile in Babylon. Judah, the Southern Kingdom of Israel was conquered by the forces of Babylon in the sixth century B.C. The Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. The city was demolished. Many were killed. Families were separated. The entire nation was in chaos. Now the majority of the survivors were in exile. They were living in captivity as slaves. They were at the mercy of other people's choices and decisions.

To them, the prophet Isaiah delivers God's message: "But now, this is what the Lord says: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called 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 overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; and the flame will not consume you."² I will hold you. I will protect you. I will strengthen you. You are mine. What a wonderful word of protection! What a comforting word of promise!

The nation of Israel and Judah were chosen and elected to bear God's redeeming word to all nations. Through Jesus Christ, you and I are chosen to bear God's redeeming word to all people. At our baptism, the Lord has declared to us, "I have called you by name, you are mine." That is exactly what happened at our baptism.

Isaiah reminds Israelites that God has chosen them, and they will not lose their identity as God's people no matter what happens to them. They will return to Zion and their protection is assured.

God's protection is not just for the Israelites, but it is for all God's people.

Newscaster Paul Harvey (1918-2009) once told a remarkable story of God's divine protection over thousands of allied prisoners during World War II. Many of these POWs were Christians.

One day, the American Air Force had a bombing operation in Japan. One of the B-29 bombers had that mission. It took off from the island of Guam headed for Kokura, Japan. It was carrying a tremendous amount of bombs. It intended to destroy the city of Kokura. However, when the plane came to the target area, the place was covered with thick clouds. The pilot could not see the target area. The B-29 bomber circled the area for about an hour until its fuel supply reached the danger point.

The captain and his crew were frustrated because they were right over the primary target, but could not carry out their mission. Finally, they decided to attack the secondary target. So, they moved to another target. The sky was clear there. And their mission was completed with success.

Sometime later the captain received shocking information from military intelligence. Just one week before that bombing mission, the Japanese had

² Isaiah 43:1-2.

transferred one of their largest concentrations of captured Americans to the city of Kokura. Upon reading this, the officer exclaimed, “Thank God for the cloud! If the city wasn’t covered with clouds, it would have been destroyed and thousands of American soldiers would have been killed.”³ Is it a coincidence? Maybe. But I believe it is God’s providential protection. A lot of times we don’t even realize that we are constantly under God’s protection. He is watching over us all the time.

The Lord knows each and every one of us. He says, “I have called you by name. You are mine.” Can you imagine that you belong to him? He knows you by name. You not only have your own name; but you also have a new name. Do you know what your new name is? Your new name is “God’s Child.”

Having a new name is a wonderful thing. It changes your identity. It changes your self-worth.

Mrs. Bernaducci was a Special Ed teacher. She had a child in her class named Steven Morris. He was an Afro-American child who was blind. Understandably, his blindness impacted his self-esteem. Steven knew he could not do much without being able to see. As a result, he had a very low self-esteem. However, over a period of time, the teacher noticed that Steven had an exceptional hearing.

One day she put the class mascot, a mouse, into the trash can. She did that purposely. The scratching noise created a minor panic among students. Then Steven located the mouse. Mrs. Bernaducci exclaimed: “Steven, you are absolutely amazing! You are truly a wonder!”

Then she started to call him Stevie the Wonder. It had become his nickname. Everyone called him Stevie Wonder. That new name changed his attitude. The next year little Stevie Wonder, full of a sense of his own value and self-worth, began playing the piano. And you know the rest of the story. Stevie Wonder went on to become one of the most successful musicians.⁴ All because he received a new name from someone who cared for him.

We all have a new name in Christ. That name is “God’s Child.” God says to us, “I have called you by name. You are mine.”⁵ We all should live with that identity.

³ An illustration from www.esermons.com under the title “God’s protection.”

⁴ An illustration from www.esermons.com.

⁵ Isaiah 43:1a.

