INH Hymns: Sermon 23-48
19th Sun. after Trinity  Isaiah 43:1-4a  10/15/23

"43 But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel:
"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine.
2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.
When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you.
3 For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in your place.
4 Since you were precious in My sight, You have been honored, and I have loved you."

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

That last sentence is truly music to our ears, "Since you were precious in My sight, You have been honored, and I have loved you." What would possibly make us precious to God? It certainly was not our great worth. Isaiah is also the one who describes our true worth in very vivid terms. In chapter 64:4 He says, "But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our rightouseneses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away." The word for filthy rags is very literally a menstrual rag. That is what our best works, our rightouseneses are like before God. Can you imagine what our worst works are like? How could God possibly consider us precious? We have dishonored God, abused His love, misused His blessings, and made ourselves putrid to Him, yet He considers us precious.

That is beyond amazing! Today we want to consider the joy and peace of knowing that wonderful truth,

You Are Precious in His Sight!

Did you hear about the Barbie Doll that sold at an auction in 2010 for $302,500. A Barbie doll! Granted it had a genuine diamond necklace, but it was still a Barbie doll. Or how about the 1963 prototype of the first G.I. Joe that sold for $200,000 in 2003. Why would someone pay that much for a toy? In that case it is nostalgia. People like to collect things that remind them of their childhood; of carefree days playing with friends. Good memories makes these things precious to them.

That doesn’t even begin to compare to what God paid for you. Our text says, “Fear not, for I have redeemed you.” God bought you back. He paid the most unbelievable price for you. He bought you with the life of His own Son. That’s how precious you are to God! Why? Because He loves you that much. God created mankind and then He lost them all, and that is the price He was willing to pay to get even some of them back. Talk about honoring you. That gives us the highest honor to be considered that valuable to God. Just listen again to the way He talks about you now. “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine.”

You belong to me now. He is very possessive of you. He’s not going to let anyone else have you.

When you hold something to be that precious, you are going to take good care of it? If you paid $200,000 for a G.I. Joe, I’m guessing you are not going to play with it in the sand box, or leave it lying out in the back yard in the rain. Or if you paid over $300,000 for a barbie you probably aren’t going to cut off her hair as some little girls have been known to do, or leave it lying around for the dog to chew on. You are going to keep it in a safe place and protect it, right? Look at what God says in our text about how He takes care of you. “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you.” We are still living in this world, there are going to be troubles and sorrows, pains and heart aches. But God is going to be right with you and take care of you. He is not going to let you drown in the rivers of sorrow.
He is not going to let you be burned by the fires of temptation or persecution. He bought you with His own blood, He is going to protect you at all costs.

If something is truly precious to you, then you are also going to think about it often. You are going to pay attention to it and make sure it is still OK. Our most precious thing in this life is our children. You never stop thinking about them. Our Old Testament Reading from Psalm 139 mentions something truly incredible in that regard. It is amazing enough to know that God formed each one of us individually in our mother’s womb. Then it says He made plans for your whole life. That’s so amazing and wonderful. But I have to admit, I never really thought about the next verses 17&18. “How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand.”

There is that word precious again. It is difficult to tell in the Hebrew what the word precious goes with, whether God’s thoughts toward me are precious to Him or to me. But either way it is amazing. The main point is that God is thinking about you all the time with His loving kindness. King David is trying to add up all God’s thoughts toward him. He concludes that they are “more in number than the sand.” Have you ever really stopped to think about how tiny a single grain of sand is, and how many of them there are on a single beach? It’s impossible to count them. That is how much God thinks about His precious children. In Psalm 8 King David is looking up into the starry sky and marvels “What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?” Ps. 8:4 We are so tiny and insignificant in the whole universe. It really is amazing that God should pay any attention to us at all. But not only does He know us, He is thinking about us all the time 24/7; Thoughts of lovingkindness and tender mercy.

God’s thinking about us is not like our thinking about each other. We think about our children and grandchildren every day, but we don’t always know what is going on in their life unless they call and tell us. But God knows everything about us. Listen to the first six verses of Psalm 139: “O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it.” Jesus tells us that God even knows how many hairs are on your head at any given time. For that matter He knows how many cells are in your body.

Also we think about others but most of the time we are helpless to really do anything. Some of you have been thinking a lot about pastor Wayne Eichstadt’s wife Tina since she had a massive heart attack this past Wednesday. You think about her but you are totally helpless to do anything to help her. When God thinks about you and sees your need, He does have the power and ability to do whatever you need.

Pastor Hein, who has been battling a sever form of cancer for a year now, wrote in His Caring Bridge blog a little while ago about this verse: “For the LORD to constantly think about me with His lovingkindness is baffling! … If only we took the time to glance and consider each tiny pebble of His thoughts toward us, we would only be led to marvel and be led to thanksgiving and praise. Thus we can go forward confidently in life knowing that all will be completely well since He has written all our days which He has fashioned for us in His book. He already knows how the days will unfold … even before I existed, even when as yet there were none of them. And even then His thoughts of lovingkindness were leading Him to work all things for my best, all according to His good and gracious plan. What, then, is there to worry, fret, or be disgruntled at? Absolutely nothing. Everything will be alright. Yes, everything will be great. LORD, lead me to count your blessings and rejoice in Your grace!”
Psalm 36:7 echoes that sentiment. “How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings.”

Finally if you are so precious to God, shouldn’t He be even more precious to you in your heart? Our Epistle Reading 1 Peter 2:2-10 speaks of Jesus as being precious three times. He refers to Psalm 118 which describes Jesus as the Stone which the builders rejected but it became the chief Cornerstone. Then he quotes Isaiah 28:16 which says, “Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.” Have any of you watched “It’s the Great Pumpkin Charlie Brown?” Linus was so sure the Great Pumpkin would rise out of the pumpkin patch that he sat in the pumpkin patch all night while the other children were out Trick-or-Treating and having a party. Not only was Linus greatly disappointed that the Great Pumpkin didn’t come, but he was put to shame because all the other kids made fun of him for believing in something that wasn’t real and wasting his time waiting for it.

That probably how the world thinks of us as we are waiting for Jesus to return and take us to heaven. The world laughs at us and thinks it is foolish to believe in that. They think we are wasting our time and missing out on all the “fun” in life. But God says, “he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.” This is the God who has all power, wisdom and knowledge; the God who plans and it is done; the God who cannot fail to keep His promises. This is the God who considers you precious and thinks about you all the time. He says there is no way in the world that you will be put to shame for believing in Jesus and waiting for His return. It will happen and you will rejoice.

King David was certain of that. In Psalm 139:17-18 when he said, “How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand;” He concluded with these glorious words, “When I awake, I am still with You.” That is true when we awake from a night’s sleep. His mercy is new every morning. But even more wonderful, it is also true when we awake from the dust of death. We will still be with Him and we will be forever.

“Therefore,” Peter continues, “to you who believe, He is precious.” Our Savior is so precious to us, He has taken the sting out of death and given us life. He is with us always and thinks about us always because we are precious to Him. May we always think about Him and hold Him dear in our heart.

Amen