

## He Only Has Eyes for You<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 43:1-7

<sup>1</sup>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.

<sup>2</sup>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.

<sup>3</sup>For I am the LORD your God,  
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

I give Egypt as your ransom,  
Cush and Seba in exchange for you.

<sup>4</sup>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.

<sup>5</sup>Fear not, for I am with you;  
I will bring your offspring from the east,  
and from the west I will gather you.

<sup>6</sup>I will say to the north, Give up,  
and to the south, Do not withhold;  
bring my sons from afar  
and my daughters from the end of the earth,

<sup>7</sup>everyone who is called by my name,  
whom I created for my glory,  
whom I formed and made." (ESV)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I want to start this morning by taking you back a few years, sixty-four to be more precise. You may remember the ancient cartoon series *Rocky and Bullwinkle Show*. It was one of my favorites. There was a mini-series known as, "Dudley Dornight, Canadian Mountie." Dudley had a thing for Nell Fenwick, daughter of Inspector Fenwick. You could say that Dudley only had eyes for Nell. However, Dudley and his horse, "Horse," continually needed to rescue Nell from the nefarious Snidely Whiplash. He would kidnap Nell and tie her to the railroad tracks or a keg of gunpowder. Dudley would rush to the rescue and shout, "I'll save you, Nell," but most of the time it was actually "Horse" who did the saving.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from a sermon from Lent 2015. Publisher was *Creative Communications*.

Two things jump out at me from this morning's text, Isaiah 43:1-7. "I only have eyes for you" and "I'll save you!"

The song "I Only Have Eyes for You" was composed in 1934 by Harry Warren and Al Dubin. It has been recorded by numerous musicians including Peggy Lee, Frank Sinatra, and Art Garfunkel. *Rolling Stone* ranks the Flamingo version of the song #157 in their list of the top 500 Greatest Songs of All Time.

The Lord has His own version of this golden oldie: "You are valuable in My eyes!" The you in our text is singular, not plural. It is you, not you all! Singular you denotes a focus that is individual and intimate, particular and personal. The same specific concern for you comes in Isaiah 43:1 where God says, "I have called you by name, you are Mine." His care is cosmic and universal, to be sure, but it emphasizes the value God places on you, He employs twenty-five second person word forms in these seven verses. Over and over again it is you, you, you ... you! "You are valuable in My eyes!"

THE BIG QUESTION OF THE DAY: Where do I find my value? To get at this, let me talk a moment about mirrors. Many years ago, at the eastern end of the trolley line in Cleveland, there was an amusement park called Euclid Beach. It closed following my first year in college. The main entrance gate has been designated a national historic landmark. Anyway, my mother's parents would take us there once a year. Marilyn and I went there for several dates while we were in high school. Like most amusement parks of that day, it had a "fun house," one part of which contained a hall of mirrors. Some mirrors made the visitors look tall and skinny. Others made them look short and squat. And still others would make the visitors look ugly and creepy. None of them reflected who we truly were.

And neither do the mirrors that surround us. Just turn on the TV, surf the internet, go to the mall, pick up a magazine. There we see perfect people with perfect families and perfect marriages delighting in perfect jobs. And when these images seductively summon us, what do we see? We see that we do not measure up. You name it – we do not have it. Addicted to how the world sees us, we begin feeling tall and skinny, short and squat, ugly and creepy. Think of the criticism Mattel and its unrealistic Barbie doll have received. If we stare into these mirrors long enough, we begin to languish, lose heart, and feel worthless.

And when we feel worthless, we not only discount ourselves, we begin discounting everybody as well. You name them – we discount them: spouse, children, colleagues, parents, boss. When we feel like nothing, we treat other people like nothing. We sell each other off for cut-rate prices, slashing and burning one another's value and reputation. Obsessed with what we do not have, we can become stuck in the game of gossip, silent stares, and the tangle of judgment.

Here is the crux of the matter. How you stack up in the eyes of others does not reflect your true value, any more than the fun house mirrors. Your value comes from the Lord, and He affirms, "You are valuable in My eyes." It is the same you – singular, not plural. Specific, reserved, and exact. It is you! And you are incredibly valuable. The Hebrew word, here

translated as “valuable”, connotes significance, stature, and substance. You are prized, priceless, preferred, and precious.

So, how do we determine our value? The Lord says in Isaiah 43:6-7, “Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the end of the earth. All upon whom My name is called, and whom I created for My glory, whom I formed and whom I made.” God has created and claimed, fashioned and formed us. We are His sons and daughters. Can we get any more valuable than that?

Value is also based on how much someone is willing to pay. When we sell a house we set a value, but it only makes a difference if a perspective buyer is willing to pay the price. What is the value in spite of what the appraiser may say? God says in Isaiah 43:4, “And I will give people in exchange for you, and nations in exchange for your life.” When Israel passed through the Red Sea, the Lord paid for it with the life of the Egyptians. Now Israel is about to leave their captivity through the Persian King Cyrus and God will pay for it with the life of the Babylonians. Our God is willing to lay down people’s lives for us.

Of course, nowhere does this become more apparent than in the sacrifice of His Son. “For we were redeemed not with precious metals – such as silver or gold – but with the holy, innocent, precious blood of our Savior.”

But why trust the Lord to place a value on us? Just who is this God anyway? Isaiah 40:26 says He calls every star by name. The Milky Way is 104,000 light years in diameter and contains over 100 billion stars. And our sun is on the extreme outer edge. To count the stars one-by-one would take a person over 3,000 years. (Hey, I’ve got time! How about you?) According to the latest findings from the Hubble Space Telescope, there are hundreds of billions more galaxies in the universe! And our God calls each of them by name! This is the God who says in Isaiah 43:1, “I have redeemed you. I have called you by name” and in verse 4, “You are valuable in my eyes.”

But we have just started to consider the wonder of these words! His Word is everlasting – Isaiah 40:8. His righteousness is everlasting – Isaiah 51:8; His love is everlasting – 54:8; His covenant is everlasting – 55:3. No wonder Isaiah 40:28 states, “He is the everlasting God.” This is the One who says, “I only have eyes for you” and “I will rescue you.”

Who? You! Still you, just you, always you, forever and ever ... you! Are what? Valuable, cherished, of infinite worth. Where? Not in the eyes of Babylon. There we are nameless numbers and state-owned statistics. Where are we valuable? Not in our eyes. When our eyes are wide open, we see duplicity, dishonesty, and continuous sin.

So, where are we valuable? God says, “In My eyes!” To quote Luther, “Although in supreme trials you seem nothing in your own eyes and are condemned as one cast off by the

world, and even in those of your brothers... Fear not. In my eyes I regard you as a precious jewel.”<sup>2</sup>

But there is more. In the baptismal water, God claimed you as His own; and on a hill called Calvary, He paid for you with His Son, Jesus. This means God has more than just eyes for you. He has hands and feet for you, nailed to a cross. He has a head for you, adorned with a crown of thorns. He has a side for you, thrust through by a spear. He has a body for you, wrapped hastily in cloths and laid in a borrowed tomb.

But there is still more! God has a heart for you. Jesus says, “As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you” (John 15:9). God has ears for you, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7). And God has body and blood for you, one you receive most Sundays. Jesus says, “(My body and blood) given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins” (c.f. Mark 14:23).

Isaiah testifies to one indisputable fact. Our God loves these lyrics: “The moon may be high, but I can’t see a thing in the sky. I only have eyes for you.”<sup>3</sup> Amen.

May the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

**Soli Dei Gloria!**

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<sup>2</sup> Martin Luther, *Lectures on Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, et al, *Luther’s Works* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1972), 17:88.

<sup>3</sup> Songwriters Durbin, Al/Warren, Harry; Lyrics © Warner/Chappell Music, Inc.