

Immanuel Lutheran Mail Ministry



Isaiah 43:1-7 *Fear 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."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.³ 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.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.⁵ Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you.⁶ 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,⁷ everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."*

He Only Has Eyes for You

The song "I Only Have Eyes for You" was composed in 1934 by Harry Warren and Al Dubin. In the years since it has been covered by numerous musicians, including Frank Sinatra and Art Garfunkel among many others. *Rolling Stone* magazine ranks the song #157th in their list of the 500 Greatest Songs of All Time. "The moon may be high, but I can't see a thing in the sky. I only have eyes for you."

Well, our Lord has His own version of this golden oldie, which we find in our text: **"you are valuable in My eyes."** Now, you can't tell this in English, but in the Hebrew, it's very clear: the *you's* throughout our text are singular, not plural. It's *you* not *you all*. A singular *you* brings a focus that is individual and intimate, particular and personal. The same specific concern for *you* comes in the very first verse of our text where God says, "I have called you by name, you are Mine." His care is far-reaching and universal, certainly, but to emphasize the value God places on you, He employs twenty-five second person singular pronouns in these seven verses. Over and over again it is you, you, you . . . you! "You are valuable in My eyes."

Those who first received these words were far away from home. These Israelites were exiles in Babylon, and Babylon said, "You are nothing in my eyes." Babylon was distant, aloof, cold, and calculating. It called Judean exiles state slaves and prisoners, just cogs in their ever-growing political machine. And yet, as God viewed them, they were tremendously valuable. This evening, we'll be answering the question, "Where do I find my value?" as we consider the theme, **God Only Has Eyes for You.**

Have you ever visited a funhouse and taken a look in the mirrors before? When I was growing up, there was at the annual Franklin Fourth of July Fair, a funhouse that me and my younger brother liked to visit each year. There were lots of oddities in that funhouse, strobe lights and rotating hallways and crooked rooms, but I always particularly liked the room of mirrors. Some mirrors would make you look tall and skinny. Others would make you look short and fat. Others would warp you beyond recognition. But everyone who looked in those mirrors understood that they didn't reflect who you really were.

And neither do the mirrors that surround us today. If you just turn on the TV, scroll through social media, flip through a magazine, there you see perfect people with perfect families and perfect marriages working their perfect jobs. But when we look at these types of images, what do we really see? We see ourselves and how we just don't measure up. You name it—we don't have it. Addicted to

how the world sees us, we begin feeling tall and skinny, short and fat, ugly and creepy. When we look into the mirrors of the world long enough, we start to feel rather worthless and empty. And the sad thing is, unlike with funhouse mirrors, we don't easily recognize the lie.

And when we feel worthless, we not only discount ourselves, but we take out our disappointment and begin discounting everybody else. You name them—we discount them: spouse, child, colleague, parent, boss. When we feel like nothing, we tend to treat other people like nothing. Obsessed with what we don't have, we get stuck in the game of gossip, and slander, and reviling judgment.

Let me be as clear as possible. This sermon is not meant to be a self-esteem builder, but rather to examine where true value can be found. How you stack up in the eyes of others does not reflect your true value. Your value comes from the Lord, and He says, ***"You are valuable in My eyes."*** It is the same *you*—singular, not plural, extremely specific. It is *you*! And *you* are incredibly valuable. The Hebrew word here, which is actually translated "precious," in our text, denotes significance, value, and substance. God declares that you are prized, priceless, preferred, and precious.

Let me explain. In 2001, the Arizona Diamondbacks baseball team won the MLB World Series in only their fourth year as a franchise. It was an exciting time for the city of Phoenix as this was their first major sports championship. Shortly after this, the team's star Left Fielder Luis Gonzales chewed a piece of gum and handed it to a fan who requested it, that fan then sold the gum in an auction which lasted two weeks, eventually selling for \$10,000. I wonder what would happen if I handed a piece of my chewed gum to someone? Pretty sure I'd get slapped.

So we see, value is based on ownership then? That's at least partially true, and the Lord says in the last two verses of our text, ***"Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."*** God has created and claimed, fashioned and formed us. We are His sons and His daughters we are under His ownership.

But value is also based on how much someone is willing to pay, because even Luis Gonzales chewed gum would be worthless unless a buyer was willing to spend on it. And God says in the middle of our text, ***"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."*** When Israel passed through the Red Sea, the Lord paid for it with the life of Egyptians. Now Israel is about to leave their captivity through the Persian King Cyrus and God would pay for it with the life of Babylonians. Our God is willing to pay a steep price for His people.

But *why* would God place such value on us? It doesn't make any earthly sense, especially when you consider who this God is. Both in the Psalms and in Isaiah, just a few chapters before this, God declares to us that he counts each of the stars, and He knows them all by name. (cf. Psalm 147:4; Isaiah 40:26) Our Milky Way galaxy is 104,000 light-years across and contains over 100 billion stars. To count them one by one would take a person over 3,000 years. And according to NASA, there are about 125 billion galaxies in the universe! And God calls every one of those stars by name! This is the God who says to you, ***"I have redeemed you, I have called you by name,"*** and, ***"You are valuable in My eyes."***

But there is more. In the following verses and chapters of Isaiah, we're told about the everlasting nature of God. For instance, in verse eight just after our text, we can read that His Word is everlasting; in chapter 51, His righteousness is everlasting; (51:8); chapter 54 tells us His love is everlasting; (54:8) chapter 55 that His covenant is everlasting; (55:3) And so in chapter 40, Isaiah simply says ***"He is the everlasting God."*** The same One who says, "I only have eyes for you."

Who? *You*. Still you, always you, forever and ever . . . you! Are what? Valuable, cherished, of infinite worth. Where? Not in the eyes of Babylon. Not in the eyes of the United States. There we are nameless numbers and state-owned statistics. Where are we valuable? Not in our eyes either. When our eyes are wide open, we see our envy, dishonesty, idolatry, and ongoing sin—no inherent value to be found here.

So where are we valuable? God says, “In My eyes!” As Luther wrote when He was discussing this very text, “Although in supreme trials you seem nothing in your own eyes and are condemned as one cast off by the world, in [God’s] eyes you are glorious. Therefore you may be vile in your own eyes, in the eyes of the world, and even in those of your brothers; Fear not. In [God’s] eyes [He regards] you as a precious jewel.”

But there is still more, for your value to God is not just due to the fact that He created you. In your baptisms, God claimed you as His very own precious possession; and on a hill called Calvary, He paid a price unimaginable for you with the life of 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, crowned with thorns. He has a side for you, thrust through by a spear.

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. Jesus says, “***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. Jesus’, which He promises are, “***Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins.***” (cf. Mark 14:23)

Isaiah testifies to this one indisputable fact: you are of tremendous worth to God, **He Only Has Eyes for You**. Amen.

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7)
Amen.

Pastor Sam Rodebaugh
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