

SERMON: “The Heart of a Father.”

Rev. Geoff Ross: Sunday, June 17, 2018, St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Brampton

Over the past few years Isaiah 43 has become a very special text for me: it offers the full compassion, devotion/commitment, protection and promise of God’s love toward us – God’s creation/children; it gives to us a comfort, security/reassurance, hope that can only come directly from God’s words/promises/heart – a heart expressing his love/comfort/hope/aspirations, plan/purpose for us – His named/known/loved children. Spoken through the Prophet Isaiah, these are God’s words expressing a message of hope/comfort/assurance/love that I believe God wants/longs/needs for us to hear at times in our lives when we feel alone/unloved/lost/abandoned: it reveals to us the heart of a father that loves us and wants nothing to harm us.

“I have called you by name; now you belong to me - you are mine.”

“To me, you are very dear – you are precious in my sight – and I love you.”

“Don’t be afraid! I am with you – I have rescued/redeemed you.”

[Father’s Day:all have fathers/good-bad-otherwise – they not only help make us/shaped us. Life spent in opposition/imitation – rejection/acceptance. Now a father: realize father/child relationship:never easy]

Parenting is not an easy endeavour – not for the weak/faint-hearted/queasy; neither is love: being a loving/father of a rebellious/stubborn/stiff-necked people such as the Israelites/us must’ve tried God’s patience. But the Prophet Isaiah depicts that God did what most parents do; He showed His love for us through His actions: in Isaiah 42 God reveals the full extent of His love by revealing His plan for them/us by choosing to send a “servant” – His Son/Jesus – who will restore/redeem/save us. This is when God lays out the plan that Jesus carries out/commits Himself to by coming to be-with us to die for us – it’s the source of His ‘mission statement’ that we hear Him read in Luke. And it is because of this plan that God makes the honest/emotional/passionate promises – to restore/protect/love/do anything for them/us/you/me: to God we’re His children – and He would do anything for us.

[40 yrs ago:15/injured/Hospital/father came in: “Where is my son!”/fainted.... Do anything. The heart of a father.]

The passage begins with God reminding the people of Israel that He “created” and “formed” us – that He is more than God; He’s our maker/creator/father. And because of this, we’re not to be afraid because He has already rescued/redeemed/saved us. Our relationship with God is as intimate as that of a father with his child: He calls us by name – He knows everything about us because we “belong” to Him, we’re His, like we each are someone’s child/son/daughter – flesh/bone/blood of their flesh/bone/blood, DNA/genes – made in their image through nature/nurture. Nowhere else in the Bible is there as direct and personal a statement of whose we are! And because we’re God’s we have nothing to fear! The next few verses describe how – like a father carries a child to bed – God will protect us from harm/keep us safe: we won’t drown or be consumed by

flames because God is with/saves us!

[20 yrs ago:HDR tobogganing/CAR in a backpack/Arrow – Accident/head/blood in snow. Frantic/calm: carried him to car/hospital/held him as they stitched up his head: I remember the feeling/fear. We carry our hopes/fears/frailties when we carry our children: do anything for children. The heart of a father.]

I know people who can't/won't/don't see God as a Father – and I get that: but God's heart loves us just as much – and breaks just as hard – as ours/yours/mine. The rest of the passage depicts the almost frantic actions of a father who's lost his child – he calls out to her, begs/pleads/bargains with those who might have him, is willing to do/give/pay anything to have them back. And when he gets them back, relieved, rather than scold, he reminds them – again – of whose they are/who he is by telling them that nothing can ever separate them/us/you/me from his love. God does this because the heart of a father also forgives.

[35 yrs ago:Burnt bridges/long journey back/died 22yrs ago HA/wrote a letter – thanking/love/forgive him. wallpaper/compounding sins of forefathers/change course. As I said: now a father/changed/understand - human/mistakes/did his best/faults/failings – he loved me/made me/gave me who I am.]

Friends, this passage tells us that we are all God's children/made in God's image – by/out of love in/for love; it helps explain the promises God made – to save you/us – and why He kept them: we are all – always – God's children. And this is Good News: the God who created/formed/made you, has promised to be with you, to carry you through the trials of this life, to do whatever it takes to rescue/restore/save you, and to forgive you – all because He loves you. Not as God, but because He has a heart of a father. Amen.