

# Isaiah 41:1-20

## **Fear Not, for I Am with You**

Listen to me in silence, O coastlands;

let the peoples renew their strength;

let them approach, then let them speak;

let us together draw near for judgment.

**2** Who stirred up one from the east

whom victory meets at every step?<sup>[a]</sup>

He gives up nations before him,

so that he tramples kings underfoot;

he makes them like dust with his sword,

like driven stubble with his bow.

**3** He pursues them and passes on safely,

by paths his feet have not trod.

**4** Who has performed and done this,

calling the generations from the beginning?

I, the Lord, the first,

and with the last; I am he.

**5** The coastlands have seen and are afraid;

the ends of the earth tremble;

they have drawn near and come.

**6** Everyone helps his neighbor

and says to his brother, "Be strong!"

**7** The craftsman strengthens the goldsmith,  
and he who smooths with the hammer him who strikes the anvil,  
saying of the soldering, "It is good";  
and they strengthen it with nails so that it cannot be moved.

**8** But you, Israel, my servant,  
Jacob, whom I have chosen,  
the offspring of Abraham, my friend;

**9** you whom I took from the ends of the earth,  
and called from its farthest corners,  
saying to you, "You are my servant,  
I have chosen you and not cast you off";

**10** fear not, for I am with you;  
be not dismayed, for I am your God;  
I will strengthen you, I will help you,  
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

**11** Behold, all who are incensed against you  
shall be put to shame and confounded;  
those who strive against you  
shall be as nothing and shall perish.

**12** You shall seek those who contend with you,  
but you shall not find them;  
those who war against you  
shall be as nothing at all.

**13** For I, the Lord your God,  
hold your right hand;

it is I who say to you, "Fear not,  
I am the one who helps you."

**14** Fear not, you worm Jacob,  
you men of Israel!

I am the one who helps you, declares the Lord;  
your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.

**15** Behold, I make of you a threshing sledge,  
new, sharp, and having teeth;

you shall thresh the mountains and crush them,  
and you shall make the hills like chaff;

**16** you shall winnow them, and the wind shall carry them away,  
and the tempest shall scatter them.

And you shall rejoice in the Lord;  
in the Holy One of Israel you shall glory.

**17** When the poor and needy seek water,  
and there is none,  
and their tongue is parched with thirst,

I the Lord will answer them;  
I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

**18** I will open rivers on the bare heights,  
and fountains in the midst of the valleys.

I will make the wilderness a pool of water,  
and the dry land springs of water.

**19** I will put in the wilderness the cedar,  
the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive.

I will set in the desert the cypress,  
the plane and the pine together,  
**20** that they may see and know,  
may consider and understand together,  
that the hand of the Lord has done this,  
the Holy One of Israel has created it.

We have been going through select passages of Isaiah, and today's verses come from chapter 41. The first seven verses are about God calling people to him for judgment. Right from verse 1, God says, "Listen to me in silence, O coastlands;

let the peoples renew their strength;  
let them approach, then let them speak;  
let us together draw near for judgment." And as they do so, they come trembling and needing to encourage one another. "The coastlands have seen and are afraid;

the ends of the earth tremble;  
they have drawn near and come." And this is fitting of course b/c as we've read throughout Isaiah, the people are drawing near to the holy, holy, holy God. He is over all nations, and he rightfully punishes people for the ways they rebel against him. So the first seven verses are about the people coming to God in fear.

Although the people are gathering to him in fear, God tells them throughout the last thirteen verses, starting in verse 8, to fear not for he is with them. In verse 8, God address the Israelites "But you, Israel, my servant,

Jacob, whom I have chosen,  
the offspring of Abraham, my friend;" Again this is right after verses of fear of judgment, and God says, "But you, Israel," and calls them "my servant," his "chosen," and "offspring of Abraham, my friend." Kevin Hong shared yesterday about how this is like a child going to a parent after doing something wrong, but the parent forgiving and covering over the child's wrongdoing. God is very comforting and reassuring towards the Israelites.

Moving on, God says, "you whom I took from the ends of the earth,  
and called from its farthest corners,  
saying to you, "You are my servant,

I have chosen you and not cast you off”,” Despite all that the people have done wrong and the 70 years of exile that are right around the corner, God still calls them his own, his chosen. And perhaps the most encouraging verse, which we’ll focus on today, is verse 10:

“fear not, for I am with you;

be not dismayed, for I am your God;

I will strengthen you, I will help you,

I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Wow, what a promise. It’s an amazing promise for the Israelites who Isaiah was speaking to, and it’s also an amazing promise for us as His people today.

I think an aspect that makes this verse so awesome is that God speaks to the doubts of his people when he says “fear not” and “be not dismayed.” This is similar to the part in verse 9, “I have not cast you off.” God sees the seeds of fear or dismay: I imagine the remnant of the Israelites after exile looking at their destroyed city and thinking “we’ve been brought so low” or “we’re so far from God b/c of our sin”. I remember many times in my life too where I knew I messed up by sinning against God and against other people and I thought my guilt and shame were too much to come before God. How could God still love me after I just did that? But to this, God says, “fear not” and “be not dismayed.”

The reason to not fear or be dismayed is that God is with us. He is our God. He will strengthen, help, and uphold us. The holy God, who created everything and rules all the nations, is with us. Throughout the Bible, God has shown time and time again, that when He tells somebody to not be afraid b/c He is with them, He surely delivers. Centuries before Isaiah, he told Joshua, “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” And he led Joshua and the Israelites to defeat the people and fortified cities of the Promised Land. Centuries after Isaiah, God tells Mary and Joseph not to be afraid of what’s going to happen b/c they’ll actually be part of the fulfillment of Isaiah 7: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us).” And sure enough, God follows through w/ that promise, and we are certain of God’s presence with us b/c Jesus came to make a way to the Father.

How can we be sure that verse 10 applies to us? B/c Jesus came to earth to be with us, he paid the price for our sins, and he sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. Any strength or help we need is available to us, simply when we acknowledge God is w/ us. He upholds us w/ his righteous right hand which is a symbol of his power and control. Verses 11-20 are full of God saying “I will do this” or “I will do that”, and “I am the one who helps you, declares the Lord;” And intermixed with those declarations, God also says “You will do this” or “you will do that”: for example, “you shall thresh the mountains and crush them, and you shall make the hills like chaff;” God indeed strengthens us and helps us to do what we cannot on our own.

Today, let’s bring any and all situations in our lives to God, and receive his words to fear not, for He is with us. It can be something that’s on your mind about today that causes a bit of fear. A

final exam or a packed schedule at work is not too trivial to surrender to Him. Or it can be a season that you or somebody you know is going through. Anxiety, depression, cancer, addictions, guilt from sin, doubt - these bigger things that may cause fear, nothing is too big for God. We can be confident that God is with us. He is our God. He calls us chosen, and he'll strengthen us. He'll help us in various ways. He'll uphold us, especially when we feel weak. Let's acknowledge His presence with us today and find our strength in him.