

**13th January 2019 Do not fear, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name
Is 43:1-7 Psalm 29 Luke 3:15-17, 21-22**

'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you: I have called you by your name, you are mine' Is 43:1

As I read these words this week I felt this should be the theme of the our sermon today.
There is so much uncertainty facing us at the moment

In America

The partial shutdown of the US government has become the longest ever, with no end in sight to the political standoff.

President Donald Trump is refusing to approve a budget unless it includes funds for a wall on the Mexican border.

Democrats have rejected his request for \$5.7bn (£4.5bn).

About a quarter of the federal government is still out of operation until a spending plan is agreed, leaving 800,000 employees unpaid.

On Friday, those workers - including prison guards, airport staff and FBI agents - missed their first salaries of the year.

Not sure of all the implications but ...

Tuesday is when Government vote on the Brexit Deal impacting how our leaving of EU on 29th March

Media are describing 3 possible outcomes; it being passed, passed with amendments or rejected

If it is rejected then there could be; a no-deal, a renegotiation, a General election, a Referendum, a vote of no confidence

Our future political landscape is unknown and therefore our economic situation. Will there be lorry jams? where will we trade?

PLEASE pray for both these situations.

Closer to home some of us have significant questions over our health, our finances, the implications of getting older or of loved ones getting older

There may be situations at work or home or even here in church that are difficult or uncertain
And this accumulation of uncertainty can lead to fear, fuelled often, I have to say, by the media
Is there something today that we are afraid of, or fearful about?

How do we respond?

Listen again to those words from the start of our reading from Isaiah

'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you: I have called you by your name, you are mine'

Let's look at this passage of scripture together... you may want to have it in front of you.

We've been thinking about Isaiah a lot over the last few weeks. Remember he is writing to God's chosen people and urging them to turn away from their selfish ways and turn back to God
In these words of Isaiah there are lots of references back to the time of the Exodus when the people of Israel were brought out of Egypt and travelling towards the Promised Land

The Hebrew word *gā'al* used here for redeemed is the same as that used in Exodus to describe what was accomplished through the death of the Passover Lambs...

He writes about 'passing through the waters' Remember when God led his people through the Red Sea as He parted the waters and then let them close behind the chosen people flood the river bed again, drowning the pursuing army (Ex 14)

Isaiah 42, the last few words before we read this scripture, are of a rebellious people, choosing the wrong way. And yet - God chooses to love them and take action by redeeming them.... and us! He reminds them of times past when He has guided and sustained them to help them believe and trust that He WILL do so again.

The words in this passage are full of love and hope and promise

Look at the second half... God says

I give nations in ransom for you
you are precious
you are honoured
I love you
I will gather you back together again
I made and formed you
I created you for my glory
you are called by my name

GOD says - 'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you: I have called you by your name, you are mine'

We were thinking on Tuesday about love being a choice that results in action

God loves His people, He has made us for His glory and calls each of us by name

We can read in chapter 49:16 'See, I have **engraved** you **on the palms of my hands**'

We read that God knows the numbers of hairs on our head, the words that are on our lips before we have said them

He has created us, and calls us by name. You... and me Catherine

There will be redeeming works of water and fire but He walks through these with us.

There have been, there are, and there will continue to be, times of difficulty, uncertainty, purification

But God PROMISES to be with us, and to sustain us, because we are HIS

He has chosen to love us and acts accordingly.

WE are HIS!

Important to get hold of this We are His NOT He is mine!

John the Baptist understood

Look at what he says in the gospel reading today

One who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals' Luke 3:16

Look at the words of the Psalmist

Many verses about the voice of the Lord and the power of the voice of the Lord

But look at the last couple of verses (29:10&11)

The Lord sits enthroned about the flood;
the Lord sits enthroned as kind for evermore.

The Lord shall give strength to his people;
the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

Do we trust Him as King?? Do we surrender to Him as King trusting that He does know best and that His ways are not always our ways but they are the best?
Who wears the crown? Us? Me? Or Jesus?

It's a choice that we have to make, daily, sometimes hourly.

Earlier in the week I was in a discussion where someone physically enacted taking the crown off themselves and placing it on the head of someone else (Jesus) and it made me think?

Who wears the crown in my life?

Do I hold on to it and try to govern everything and direct everything myself? Relying on my strength and understanding?

Or do I truly surrender myself and everything & everyone else in my life to Christ? To His power and authority?

Jesus taught us to pray 'Give us THIS day our DAILY bread'
+ Steven challenged me to trust that He IS sufficient for TODAY
Do I CHOOSE to believe it and live accordingly?

Who is actually King in my life? Whose authority and leadership and wisdom do I live under?

There is a LOT of uncertainty at the moment in our world

There is much that we could be fearful of and much that the media highlights that we should be fear

Words have as much power as we give them in our lives

Let us choose to stop letting fear call the shots and instead put our quiet but certain confidence and hope in the promises of God

God makes that awesome promise to us who believe and trust in Jesus as Lord, who through the redeeming blood of Christ are called by His name

To us, to you and me, He says,

'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you: I have called you by your name, you are mine'

Crown

Have you chosen to surrender to Him?

Have you been baptised as a follower of Christ?

Were you baptised as a baby but never chosen to place the crown on Jesus as Lord of your life?

Confirmation?

Renewal of baptism vows