

YOU ARE MINE

Doug McNett // March 1, 2026

Text: Isaiah 43 (ESV)

Big Idea: Because you belong to God,
reject lesser saviors and lean fully.

Well, good morning; how are we? Good, good. I want to give a quick shout-out to those joining us in our online community. We're grateful you're part of the Foothills family, worshiping with us wherever you are. If we haven't met, my name is Doug. I'm one of the pastors here, and I'd love to connect with you on the patio after service.

This morning we're continuing our series through Isaiah. Go ahead and turn with me to Isaiah chapter 43.

You know, there are moments in life when what once felt secure suddenly isn't. Leadership fails. Institutions crumble. Plans collapse. What you assumed would hold steady, it just doesn't. And somewhere in that instability, a quiet question can tend to surface: "Where is God in this?" It's not always out loud. And not in defiance or anger. Sometimes it's just beneath the surface.

And the text we're looking at this morning in Isaiah 43 is spoken into a moment just like that.

God's people were facing exile. Their city threatened. Their temple desecrated. Their leadership exposed. What once defined stability was collapsing. And into that instability is when God speaks here.

Check out verse 1, of Isaiah 43 with me: "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.'"

Wow, that's a striking way to begin.

There's no strategy given or political explanation. There's no immediate correction to be made by the people. Instead, the first word into their collapse is covenant: "I have redeemed you... you are mine."

I love this. I love how God identifies Himself by saying, "He who created you... he who formed you..." This isn't a sentimental reassurance. This is what we would call covenant grounding.

Now, real quick, we tend to throw around "Christianese" language, so when I say "covenant," I'm talking about God binding Himself to His people with promises rooted in His character and not in their performance.

So, the One speaking is their Creator. The One who formed them as a nation. The One who established covenant with Abraham and delivered them from Egypt. He speaks not as a distant deity, but as their covenant Lord.

And what does He say? "Fear not." Why? "For I have redeemed you." Redemption here it isn't emotional uplift. It's purchase language. It's deliverance language. It's ownership language. He says, "I have called you by name." That is personal. He says, "you are mine." That alone can steady a trembling soul.

Some of us know what it feels like to grow up without protection. To feel unseen. To feel like no one stepped in. Or to feel like we were left.

And when that's part of your story, that promise of "You are mine" lands differently. It doesn't sound so religious. It sounds like rescuing.

And our text here in Isaiah 43 isn't just about Israel performing better. It's not starting with their obedience. No, instead, it's about their belonging. Before they correct anything. Before they reform anything or prove anything. God says, "You are mine."

Isaiah 43 is saying, look at what God has done. Look at who He is. Look at what He promises. Now let's lean into Him.

And now Verse 2 goes on to say, "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.”

Notice what God doesn't say. He doesn't say, "If you pass through the waters." He says, "When." He doesn't say, "I will keep you from all fire." He says, "When you walk through fire."

The promise is not absence of hardship. The promise is presence in hardship.

And for Isaiah's original audience, this language would have immediately stirred up some memories.

When God separated the waters of the Red Sea in Exodus 14, He made a way for His people to walk through on dry ground while the Egyptian army closed in behind them. The waters stood like walls on either side. Israel passed through the sea, not because they were strong, but because God was present.

And then, later, when the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land in Joshua chapter 3, they stood at the edge of the Jordan River while it was at flood stage. The river was impassable. And again, God caused the waters to stand still so His people could cross over on dry ground.

So when Isaiah says, "When you pass through the waters," he's not just trying to be poetic, He's actually recalling history. He's reminding them that the God who made a way through the Red Sea... the God who stopped the Jordan River... that same God is still with you.

And now they face a different kind of water. It's the water of exile. The rising tide of the Babylon Empire. An absolutely overwhelmingly powerful empire. And God says, "They shall not overwhelm you." The waters may rise. But they aren't gonna own you.

Then He adds, "When you walk through fire you shall not be burned." You with me on this? When you walk through fire...you shall not be burned. This is incredible. In the ancient world, fire was often imagery for judgment and devastation. Cities were burned. Nations were burned. Temples burned. And Isaiah is preparing them for the reality that Jerusalem itself will burn.

And one of the beautiful things we see later in Scripture is how God's covenant promises become visible in history. Did you catch it? Remember when there three young men who were thrown into a literal furnace in Babylon, the fire didn't consume them! Now, Isaiah isn't predicting that moment directly, but it becomes a powerful picture of the truth. When you belong to Him, the fire doesn't have the final word.

What Isaiah is getting at it is that because the Israelites belong to Him they will be protected. They will not be consumed. That's the thread holding this entire passage together.

"You are mine." And the waters of life don't erase that. The fire doesn't erase that. Exile can't erase that!

And for us, that means something deeply steadying. You may walk through waters that feel overwhelming. You may walk through seasons that feel like fire. But the defining reality of your life is not the intensity of the waters, it's not the presence of hardship, it's the identity given to you by God. "I have redeemed you... you are mine."

Now Verse 3 grounds it further for us. "For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."

You might want to underline or circle that word Savior cause it's central to this chapter. The text doesn't say political ally, military strength or economic reform.

He says, "I am... your Savior."

Isaiah says, "I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you..."

Ahh! Do you hear the covenant affection? "Precious... honored... I love you..." This isn't some vague divine kindness. This is covenant loyalty. This is the God of all that exists, the One who sustains every breath and designed every cell in your body and on this earth describing His view of those who belong to Him! It's really incredible!

John Calvin once wrote that when God calls Himself our Savior, He "testifies that He is the author of our safety, so that we may not seek help elsewhere." That is exactly what Isaiah is doing here. He is cutting off every rival source of security.

Look at what God has done. Look at who He is. Look at what He promises. Now... lean into Him. Verse 5 repeats it: "Fear not, for I am with you." This repetition is intentional. The exile would tempt the people to think that God had abandoned them. That their sin had exhausted His patience. That Babylon's gods were just stronger.

But the Holy One of Israel says, "nah, I am with you."

Not because they performed well. Not because they avoided discipline. But hear this, because He formed them and redeemed them. Church, this is where dependence begins. It begins with identity. You can't meaningfully lean into God until you know you belong to Him. And leaning in here looks like this, when fear rises, you rehearse who He says you are before you rehearse what could go wrong.

Now Isaiah shifts the scene. Beginning in verse 8, the tone changes. The language becomes almost, like, courtroom-like. He says, "bring out the people who are blind, yet have eyes, who are deaf, yet have ears! All the nations gather together, and the peoples assemble."

This is covenant courtroom language. God is summoning the nations. He's challenging the false gods. He's asking a question that cuts through the fog of the exile: "Who among them can declare this, and show us the former things?"

In other words: Which of these gods, these Babylonian gods, predicted history? Which of these idols declared the future? Which of them can stand and testify? Verse 10 answers for us, "You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am He. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me."

Friends, what a passage we're digging into today. This is exclusive monotheism in bold letters. "Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me."

Verse 11 sharpens it even more, "I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior." Besides Me. There is. No. Savior.

In exile, Israel was surrounded by alternative saviors. Babylonian gods. Political powers. Cultural pressure. The temptation would be to hedge their bets. To blend. To rely on visible strength.

But God dismantles that possibility. He goes, "besides me there is no savior." There will not be any gods after Me. I think of all the things that we try to make gods in our lives. Things that we try to use to "save" us. I mean there's even new religions that say you can become a god!

Now, we don't bow before Babylonian statues, but we're not immune to these alternative saviors. Right? Let's be real for a moment. We lean on financial stability. We lean on political outcomes. We lean on reputation, health, control. Sometimes we lean on relationships without ever going to the Lord first, especially when deep down we know that what we're doing isn't best.

And you gotta know, none of those things are evil in themselves. But they're terrible saviors. They may feel good for the moment...the moment of weakness. So, we gotta ask, when the waters rise, what do we instinctively grab for?

Isaiah gently exposes the question. He doesn't rant. He doesn't shame. He simply lets God speak. He says, "I, I am the LORD." The repetition is emphatic. It's like God is clearing the room of every single rival that is wanting us. And for us, leaning in here looks like this, you name the lesser saviors that you're tempted to trust, and you refuse to give them the authority that belongs to God alone. You with me on this? We recognize He's the only Savior, He's the only One who redeems us. He's the One who calls us His. And so He shows us.

Check out the beginning of verse 14, there's a shift in tone again. "Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: For your sake I send to Babylon and bring them all down as fugitives..." God is speaking directly about Babylon. The empire that looked invincible, that looked permanent, that had swallowed Judah whole. And God says, "For your sake."

Babylon isn't ultimate. That empire is not sovereign and history isn't random. So God deliberately reminds them in verse 16 of the Exodus: "Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters..." He brings them back to the Red Sea. Check this out, He brings them back to the moment when there was no way forward, yet God made one!

But then there's this surprising command in verse 18: "Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"

God's not telling them to erase their history. He is not dismissing the Exodus. He is not minimizing what He Himself has done. But, what He is saying is don't limit Me to how I worked before. The God who split the

sea is not confined to yesterday's methods. "I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."

We've talked before about how wilderness and desert were symbols of barrenness and impossibility. And God says: I am not finished. I am not stuck. I am not done writing your story. We can't lose sight that God is the Sovereign of all.

So, look at what God has done. Look at who He is. Look at what He promises. Now we lean into Him.

If these people were feeling as though exile felt like the end of their world, God says it is not the end. If Babylon felt like the final word, it is not the final word.

And friends, that's true for us as well. Some of us quietly assume that our best days are behind us. Or, that our failures have limited what God can do in us or through us. That our story has already been written. And, Isaiah says: Don't limit Him. Don't limit Him. He's not confined to what He's done before. He's still redeeming.

And then, just when the chapter feels triumphant, God says something that kinda causes us to pause. Check out verse 22, "Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of me, O Israel. You have not brought me your sheep for burnt offerings...you have burdened me with your sins; you have wearied me with your iniquities."

After promises of redemption, after declarations of belonging, after visions of new deliverance, God confronts them. "You did not call upon me." These aren't people who leaned perfectly. They're not people who depended flawlessly or who got it right. In fact, they burdened Him with their sins. And yet...

Look at Verse 25, this is one of the most breathtaking sentences in the chapter, "I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins."

Notice He doesn't say, "because you improved." Or, "because you tried harder." "Or, because you finally leaned enough." None of that, instead He says, "For my own sake." Friends, forgiveness flows from God's character, not our performance.

And leaning in here looks like when you fail, you return quickly instead of hiding – because His mercy is grounded in His name, not your consistency.

There have been seasons in my life when I was not leaning on the Lord. I was leaning on myself. And God did not blot out my transgressions because I cleaned myself up, cause I changed my behavior, cause I had enough will power for a little while, He did it for His own name.

Friends, that's covenant mercy. That's grace. And that's why dependence is not desperation – it's alignment with reality.

Since He alone saves...we gotta lean into Him. Since He alone redeems, we gotta lean into Him. Since He alone blots out sin, we gotta lean into Him.

Isaiah 43 isn't a call to spiritual striving. It's a call to spiritual dependence.

You belong to Him. There is no other Savior. He is doing more than we can see. And His grace runs deeper than our failures. So let's not live as though we're abandoned. Let's not lean on lesser saviors or false religions that say "you can be a god too!" Let's not assume our story is finished. Because He's on the throne.

Look at what God has done. Look at who He is. Look at what He promises.

Now, let's lean into Him.