

Redeemed Sinners Devoted to God's Glory

Isaiah 43:1-7

Intro to Series

The most important things about our church are NOT what makes us *different* from other true churches, but what make us the *same*. So many churches are known for and defined by things that, though might be good, are not the most important things.

Like, their style of music. “They kill it! It’s so good! I go to that church because of its music style.” Or a church is known for a particular ministry. “They have the best children or youth ministry. My son won an iPad at a youth event.” Or a church might be known for their social activism. “They’re involved in their community, seeking to alleviate poverty or other forms of social injustices.”

Still some churches are known for their political bent. Google First Baptist Dallas and you’ll find in the bio of the Pastor that he is “Fox News contributor.” I’m not saying anything positive or negative about Fox News.

I'm saying that if a pastor of a church publicly contributes his political opinions on a news site and in his local church, that church is gonna be known for their political persuasion.

What is KABC known for? What defines us? If we are known and commended for qualities that are not emphasized in the Bible, we're probably doing something wrong.

We're kicking off a four-part series on our distinctives: what makes us who we are. But ironically, these distinctives aren't distinct. They are characteristics that every true church since the beginning has had.

I was talking to a pastor friend about this series and shared with him this very thing—it's a series on our distinctives but there's nothing distinct about them. And he asked if I titled my sermon series yet. I said, "I'm not good at that." He said, "You should call it 'Indistinct.'"

Whatever we call it, the elders felt it was necessary for us to hammer home who we are as a church. (Pastor Dillon was the first to

bring this up!) So we came up with this: *KABC is redeemed sinners devoted to...God's Word, God's People, God's Mission...all for God's Glory.* **[Look at sign in back!]**

The Glory of God in Redeeming Sinners

Today we'll focus on the most important part of that sentence: *We are redeemed sinners devoted to God's glory.* In other words, we must view ourselves (and one another) as *redeemed sinners*. Both are necessary! If we don't see ourselves as *sinners*, we'll be known for our harshness, hypocrisy, judgmentalness, pride. We will be a bunch of Pharisees.

At the same time, if we fail to see ourselves (and one another) as *redeemed*, we'll become joyless, self-atoning, risk-averting, secluded monks—constantly trying to make up for our sin, lacking assurance, avoiding the world.

We are redeemed sinners. When we take on that identity, the distinct flavor—the feel when you walk into this room on Sundays—is not overly somber nor flippancy, but *serious joy*.

We are *serious* about God and the truths we believe: that people are going to hell if they don't trust in Christ, and God is holy and he hates sin and he loves truth. But we're also filled with overwhelming joy that overflows because we know our sin has been paid for by the blood of Christ and trampled on by his death-defeating resurrection. *Serious joy.*

Let me give one example of how that distinct flavor/feel plays out in our service: the Lord's Supper. We seriously fence the table saying, this only for those who have trusted in Christ and declared their allegiance to him through baptism and committed themselves to a local church who holds them accountable to what this table represents, namely, right standing with God and unity with one another.

And then we, very seriously, confess our sins to God. But immediately after, we hear a beautiful, glorious assurance of pardon, like what we're gonna hear today, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed," reminding

us that every sin we just laid bare before God has been forgiven because of Christ.

That's joyous! And that's why we come down the aisle together to the table, with hugs and handshakes and smiles. *Serious joy*. That's the feel of this church because we recognize we're *redeemed sinners*. And therefore, as redeemed sinners, our highest devotion is to God—specifically, the glory of God.

We, as *individuals*, were made to know and enjoy the glory of God. And we as a *church* were founded in 1938 to know and enjoy and make known the glory of God. What is the glory of God? Put simply: *The glory of God is the weighty display of the greatness of who he is*. The word “glory” in the Bible carries the idea of weight. There's something weighty about who God is. And it also carries the idea of shining/showing forth that weight.

So God's glory *is the weighty display of the greatness of who he is*. That's what we were made for. We were made for something so much bigger than ourselves, hobbies, jobs,

the things that weigh on us or consume our emotional attention. We were made to know and enjoy and make know the glory of God.

The Apex of the Glory of God

But I would ask: where is the glory of God seen most clearly? What's the highest point of his glory, the apex of the display of the weightiness of who he is. I wanna argue it's the redemption of sinners.

No doubt, God shows off his glory in everything he does, but the apex of the glory of God—the highest display of the essence of who he is—is seen in his gracious, merciful, saving, loving redemption of those who have rebelled against him in their sin. I wanna make that point from Isaiah 43:1-7.

Let's dwell on the *beauty* of what it means to be redeemed sinners and then show that such redemption is the apex of God's glory. I'll show that by arguing that the ultimate end of our redemption is the glory of God.

The book of Isaiah is designed to help God's people trust him while they're in exile away from their homeland. The first half of the book predicts the judgment God would bring on Israel for all her idolatry; a judgment of exile. And it's all sad and hopeless sounding.

But there's a clear shift that takes place in ch40 of hope beyond exile. God puts on trial the idols Israel worshiped, contrasting himself with them: they're dead, lifeless, and they cannot predict the future. Which is exactly what God is doing in Isaiah 40-66.

In our passage, he predicts the redemption he'll accomplish for Israel by bringing her back to her homeland out of exile. And the point he's making is simple: *I redeem my people for my glory*. So let's reflect on the *beauty* of redemption and then we'll consider about the *goal* of redemption.

The Beauty of Redemption

I see four glorious characteristics of redemption in this passage.

1) God's Redemption is *Personal* [v1]

God contrasts the deserving judgment mentioned in 42:25 with the gracious redemption they'll get instead. [42:25-43:1, "But now"] Redemption means that we deserve judgment for our sin, but instead we're set free.

Notice the personal nature of redemption.

[v1a, "created/formed"] The word "created" is the same word used in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God *created* the heavens and the earth", which depicts the sovereign working of the one true God in making something out of nothing. He sovereignly "created"—brought out of nothing—his people.

But the word *formed* is more personal. It's the same word used in Genesis 2:7 when God made Adam: "The LORD God *formed* the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." It carries the imagery the painstaking care of a craftsman forming a piece of pottery.

I recently saw a man make a tiny teacup out of clay. The clay is spinning and he shapes with the palm of his hands. Then he adds lines. It's a project that is so tedious with tender care. And you see the end result and think, "How did that lump of clay become a beautiful piece of pottery?" It was the care of the craftsman.

God formed Adam like that. He formed you like that. Psalm 139:13, "You *formed* [same word!] my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb." But Isaiah 43 isn't talking about physical creation. It's talking about redemption. It is the redemptive new creation of his people. **[v1b, "redeemed"]**.

So the imagery of *created* and *formed* are descriptions of God's redemption. And look at the parallel phrase of "I have redeemed you." **[v1c]** To be redeemed by God is to be called by name and made his.

There's a reason Jesus says in the NT, "My sheep hear by voice, they know me, I know them. I call them by name." Redemption is personal. Get that!

The redemption of God is not like him casting a net into the sea, hoping he can catch as many fish as he can. It's more like a shepherd who goes after the one lost sheep. OR a man who chooses an adulterous woman to be his wife. It's specific, it's personal.

2) God's Redemption is *Protective* [v2]

Water and *fire* are a merism—opposites that make up the whole. It's like saying, "From the lowest valley to the highest mountain." So God protects his people from the whole... of what? The difficulties of life? Maybe.

Notice he's not promising complete/total alleviation of pain or harm. He promises protection from being consumed. The flood won't overwhelm you, but that doesn't mean you won't experience flooding. The fire won't burn you up, but that doesn't mean you won't feel it's heat.

One writer said, "In all [trials of whatever sort and however they come] there is the Lord's presence...and the Lord's control, a divine

‘thus far and no further’..., waters without drowning, fire without burning up.” (Motyer: 331)

I think an application can be made to the difficulties we experience in life. But this can’t be talking about mere physical protection from water or fire. Christians have died from drowning. Some have been burned to death. So Isaiah can’t be saying, “God promises protection from death by water/fire.”

What’s he talking about? Water/fire are symbols of judgment in the Bible. Think of Noah’s flood or Sodom and Gomorrah. So for God to say, “You will *pass through* the water and it will not overwhelm you”...“You’ll *walk through* the flame, and it won’t consume you,” means, “You will not be swept up in my judgment. I’ll keep/protect you from that.

Why? Because I have redeemed you.” God’s redemption protects his people from the judgment they deserve.

3) God's Redemption is *Precious* [vv3-4]

Notice these verbs of give/exchange. God gives nations as a ransom for Israel, meaning, he is willing to overturn empires for the sake of their redemption. That's what he did to Egypt when he rescued his people from slavery. That's what he'll do to Babylon to get them out of exile there.

It's a way of saying how much God's people *mean* to him. That's why he says in v4...

- *You are precious.* You have *value* to me like a rare jewel.
- *You are honored.* I bestow dignity and worth on you.
- *You are loved.* You are the object of my deep affection.

Since this is how God views his people, one writer said, "God sees no price as being too high for the redemption of his people." (ESV, 43) "Egypt, other nations, I'll give all that up, if it means I get you."

By the time we get to Isaiah 53, we know what it truly cost God to pay for the possession of his people. It cost the life of his servant.

Who is that? Isaiah 53 is a prophecy about God's Son, Jesus Christ, who would come to the world to pay the highest price for the redemption of his people—his own life.

God gave up his Son to get you! Romans 8:32, "He did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us." The redemption of God is so precious because of the value of what he gave up to secure it—his Son. **[Gospel appeal]**

Do you know yourself precious to God? How do you know? Because of what he gave up to get you. Redemption is so precious.

4) God's Redemption is Plenary

Meaning, it's full, total. Not partial. **[vv5-6]**

Notice this connection: "I am with you," "I will bring you," "I will gather you."

This is not the imagery of a father yelling out the front door across the street to tell his kids to come home for dinner. This is the picture of a father personally going out to find his lost child, and when he finds him, he picks them up and carries them home.

It is a promise that bursts beyond the mere return from exile that would take place in 538BC when Cyrus would overtake Babylon and then let the Jews go back to their homeland. It is pointing to that, but it's also pointing to something much bigger.

It's a picture of all of God's people from all nations being brought home by the Lord. North, south, east, west. Sons, daughters. All of his children. "Everyone" (as it says in v7)

The redemption of God is plenary—he redeems every last one of his people. John 11:52 says, Jesus died "to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad." God's plenary redemption is fulfilled in the NC, when God brings in his elect from every tribe, tongue, and nation, as one people redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

God's redemption of sinners is beautiful because it is personal, protective, precious, and plenary. But what's the point of it all? What's the ultimate goal of redemption?

The Goal of Redemption

I'm not asking, What's the goal? I'm asking, "What's the *ultimate* goal?" Because we could say: the goal of redemption is all the things we already mentioned. God redeems his people:

- To bring them into *personal* relationship with him.
- To *protect* them from final judgment.
- To cause them to feel loved and valued and precious more than they can imagine.
- To ensure every last one of God' people is redeemed.

All these goals of redemptions are means to a greater end, an ultimate goal. What is it? **[v7]**

Notice the similarity to v1. *Created* and *formed* are used again. He's talking about redemption. Notice what he adds: the end goal/ ultimate telos/ whole purpose of redemption is NOT *mainly* about you or me. "I created/ formed/ redeemed you *for my glory*."

That's why he did it, ultimately. And if the glory of God is the weighty display of the greatness of his essence, then his redemption of sinners is the greatness of his essence on full display.

That's why it's the apex of his glory! When Jesus died on the cross for sinners...

- The ***holiness*** of God was revealed in his unwillingness to overlook sin.
- The ***justice*** of God was unleashed in his wrath against sin.
- The ***love*** of God was lavished on those who deserve his justice.
- The ***grace*** of God achieved full pardon.
- The ***wisdom*** of God shamed the wise of the world by accomplishing great salvation in weakness and humility.
- The ***sovereignty*** of God orchestrated every detail to get Jesus on the cross.
- The ***power*** of God defeated sin, Satan, and death forever.
- The ***faithfulness*** of God fulfilled every promise he made to his people.

Redemption for sinners is the apex of God's glory because it shows forth the greatness of who he is in every way.

This is what we were made for! We were made to know and love and enjoy the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ seen most vividly in the redemption of sinners.

Can you see how this affects who we are as a church? We dare not be man-centered—where it's all about you and me and how we feel and what we prefer. No, it's about God!

- **Preaching** is about God and showing off how glorious he is.
- **Singing** is about God, as our hearts are caught up in the greatness of who he is.
- **Fellowship** is about God, compelling us to connect with and love people unlike us because that shows off how God loves to bring diverse people together.
- **Discipling** is about God, where we speak his truth to each other in love.
- **Evangelism** is about God because we want our neighbors/ co-workers/ family/ friends to know they're heading towards an eternity without God.
- **Missions** is about God because we're willing to sacrifice the comforts of the world to take the message of the gospel to people who don't yet know God.

So who are we? Who is KABC? *We are redeemed sinners devoted to God's glory.* Let us BE that and may we BE KNOWN for that.