

AUGUST 11, 2021

AGAPE FROM AFAR

Adjusting to life amidst Coronavirus

A WORD FROM PASTOR JILL

As a way to remain connected during this time apart, I will be putting together a weekly newsletter with a reflection based on the upcoming Sunday scripture passage. I hope that by taking a few moments to reflect on the Word of God and pray, we can feel grounded and connected to God and to one another during this uncertain time. *-Pastor Jill*



The passage for this Sunday is from Isaiah 49:8-16a. This portion of Isaiah was written when the Israelites were living in exile in Babylon. Living in exile, the people felt defeated, helpless and separated from God. In response to the alienation of exile, the prophet Isaiah offers this poem, which overcomes distance with intimacy, and helplessness is met by the compassion and presence of God.

Reflect more on this passage on the following pages.



Read the passage:

Isaiah 49:8-16a

Thus says the Lord:

In a time of favor I have answered you,
on a day of salvation I have helped you;

I have kept you and given you
as a covenant to the people,

to establish the land,

to apportion the desolate heritages;

9 saying to the prisoners, "Come out,"

to those who are in darkness, "Show yourselves."

They shall feed along the ways,

on all the bare heights shall be their pasture;

10 they shall not hunger or thirst,

neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them down,
for he who has pity on them will lead them,
and by springs of water will guide them.

11 And I will turn all my mountains into a road,
and my highways shall be raised up.

12 Lo, these shall come from far away,
and lo, these from the north and from the west,
and these from the land of Syene.

13 Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth;
break forth, O mountains, into singing!

For the Lord has comforted his people,
and will have compassion on his suffering ones.

14 But Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me,
my Lord has forgotten me."

15 Can a woman forget her nursing child,
or show no compassion for the child of her womb?

Even these may forget,
yet I will not forget you.

16 See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands;
your walls are continually before me.



Reflect:

1. When this passage was written the community was living in exile and felt separated from God. What circumstances in your life have made you feel separated from God?
2. What experiences have caused you to "Sing for joy"? How can you share that kind of experience with others?
3. In verse 15, the Lord says, "I will never forget you." What does that mean for us personally and as a community?
4. What is this passage calling you to do today? This week?

Pray:

God of Compassion, when we feel exiled and far away from you, remind us that you will never forget us. May we sing for joy when we remember your promises for us and for all people.

Amen.