

The Upper Room^[1] devotional reflection for Monday, May 3, 2021 comes to us from J. Leland Collins of Virginia

Isaiah 43:1-7 *1 But now, this is what the LORD says— he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. 3 For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. 4 Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life. 5 Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. 6 I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth— 7 everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”*

“The Scary Balloon”

One day I was in the kitchen when suddenly I heard my young dog barking in another room. When I went to see what was going on, I found him staring at a “Happy Birthday” balloon attached to a vase of flowers on a table.

So it often is with situations that we do not fully understand. When I was a teenager, my father’s heart attack loomed before me, filling me with the fear that he might die. Many years later my own heart attack filled me with similar apprehension about the future. Was I going to live? Would I be able to continue to work? What about my family?

I found great assurance in my faith and in God’s word and presence. In today’s scripture reading a message of comfort and reassurance comes to the beleaguered Jewish exiles in Babylon. God assured them that He was with them still and working out all things for their ultimate good.

It is good to know that whatever our fearful situations – illness, loss of a job, financial struggles – all are opportunities to remember God’s love for us and to receive God’s grace and courage to move forward in faith.

Prayer Focus: Those Dealing with Fear and Anxiety

Prayer: Help us, heavenly Father, to release fear and reclaim faith in the face of trouble, trusting that you will see us through. Amen.

Thought for the Day: God’s presence helps us live with peace and confidence.

--- J. Leland Collins

Friends –

My experience of being sick and having surgeries during the isolation of the pandemic has helped me to relate to J. Leland Collins’ observations about experiencing fear because of the certainty of illness and the uncertainty of the current circumstances and future developments.

Certainly, trusting in God’s unlimited grace offers courage and peace for those concerns. Still, it seems to me that this trust needs to be renewed often because I seem to slip away from that focus as situations continue to evolve and challenge me.

--Pastor bea

¹ <https://www.upperroom.org/>