

Jason Emberger - First Presbyterian Church of Grand Junction, CO

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*Do Not Fear: Would You Rather?*

[Isaiah 41:1-10](#)

Something I like to do with the students from time to time is play a game called “Would You Rather?” The way it works is a question is asked with a choice of two answers and you have to decide which option you would rather. For example- Would you rather be forced to dance every time you heard music or be forced to sing along to any song you heard? Either way people will look at you funny, so own it.

“Would you Rather” is not only a great way to stir up some conversation but you also end up learning some interesting things not only about each other but also yourself.

Let’s do a few more.

Would you rather live without hot water for showers/baths or live without a washing machine?

Would you rather be so afraid of heights that you can’t go to the second floor of a building or be so afraid of the sun that you can only leave the house on rainy days?

Would you rather blink twice the normal rate or not be able to blink for 5 minutes but then have to close your eyes for 10 seconds every 5 minutes? Either way, whoever you are talking to is going to be super uncomfortable.

Last one. Would you rather live trapped in constant fear and worry or live free full of hope and peace?

The answer to that last one seems obvious to us but so often we still find ourselves “trapped” or overtaken by the fear and uncertainty that seems to be all around us and is not going away.

It would be amazing to not have to struggle with fear anymore. But the reality is, fear is something we as people have struggled with since the beginning and will continue to struggle with until Christ returns. Every time we get distracted from the truth of God’s Word or rely on our own strength and our own ways we again will fall back into fear. Every time we focus on our circumstances rather than focusing on Jesus we again will be filled with anxiety and doubt.

And yet once again God says to us in Isaiah 41:10, “Fear Not!”

Fear not? Part of me is like God, do you see all that going on in the world right now? Are you reading and hearing and seeing the same things we are? Between the uncertainty of everything Covid-19, the violence against the innocent, the racial injustice and systemic racism of our country, not to mention everyday issues of life. Who wouldn’t have some anxiety? Who wouldn’t feel the waves of fear crashing in? It feels like there are many reasons to be afraid.

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But again, as we have discovered, over and over again God says, "Fear Not!"

What? Are you sure God? Why shouldn't we be afraid? Why shouldn't we be dismayed or anxiously looking around?

God's answer to fear today is the same as it was in Isaiah's day.

Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. (Isaiah 41:10)

God here is speaking to His people who are living in fear. They are in a situation that is completely unknown to them. A foreign land, under the control of other people. So much uncertainty circulates around them as all the things they were confident of and felt secure in has been taken away. The promises of Abraham seem void and they feel God has forgotten and abandoned them.

While we might not be living in captivity, we can relate to being in a situation that feels unknown and uncertain. We know what it is like to have the things we feel confident and secure in to be taken away. We know what it is like to struggle with fear and anxiety, wondering "God where are you?"

God knows all of this and our ongoing struggle with fear and again instructs us and reminds us, "Do not Fear! Do not be dismayed!"

But God is not just throwing us a bone or empty words but He gives us these two commands that are rooted and built on 5 promises or reasons to not be afraid.

God lays them out here in verse 10- I am with you; I am your God; I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will uphold you.

And what we see God doing in the first nine verses before he gives this instruction is calling us to focus on Him. He is saying, "Look to me. See who I am, God of all creation, Lord of all, and who you are... the ones I have chosen and not rejected or abandoned.

Let's do that today. Let us be reminded of who God is and why we don't have to fear.

**God is ruler of all nations.** In verse 1, God is calling all the nations to himself. He is the one that summons them reminding us He is Lord of all! In whatever circumstance we are in, or fear that we may face know that God is in control and Lord over all. That's the God who is with you to help and renew your strength.

**God is Lord of history.** We see in verses 2-4 God provides a view of history while looking into the future. God was speaking to what is and what was coming.

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Most commentators agree the “one from the east” in verse 2 is none other than Cyrus the Persian king who God stirred up to come against Babylon 150 years later than when Isaiah gave this prophecy.

Verse 4 asks, “Who has done this and carried it through in and through all generations?” In which God answers: “I THE LORD. With the first and last.” Or the beginning and the end. The alpha and omega. God is Lord over history.

He is the first. The one who created all things and put them into being. And he will be there with the last when all is accomplished according to his eternal redemptive purpose.

**God is the only one true God.** In verses 5-7 we see a picture of human life and our attempts to persuade ourselves and one another that our “gods”, and all the things we put our faith, or trust, or confidence in will save us or deliver us.

We turn to one another and encourage each other and say, “Be strong! We got this! We are going to get through this! And yes, we need to hear words like that. But the problem is what they base their words on and confidence on.

This human fabrication of false security and strength that needs to be nailed down and secured so it won't topple over.

God reminds us: Listen. Whatever that is, will not save you, will not deliver you, will not give you peace. Our God is the one true God that doesn't need to be nailed down. He won't topple over. He is the One true God and is the real deal.

Over against this desperation of self-reliance and idolatry God says to his people in verses 8–9, “But you Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, you descendant of Abraham my friend, I took you from the ends of the earth, from the farthest corners I called you. I said, ‘You are my servant, I have chosen you and have not rejected you.’”

To those who thought God forgot or abandoned they needed to be reminded that in spite of their circumstances they are still God's children. They are chosen and not rejected.

This is what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. If we believe on Jesus, we have been saved and in Christ we have been chosen.

So do not fear! Do not be dismayed! The God over all the nations, the Lord of history the beginning and the end, the One true God is with you!

Believe God's promises! Trust God! Let God be your God! Your strength and help. Lean into him and allow Him to uphold you!

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