

February 25, 2015
Isaiah 43:1-7

Midweek Lent 1
He Only Has Eyes For You

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Lenten King. Amen.

The song “I Only Have Eyes For You” was composed in 1934 by Harry Warren and Al Dubin. It has been recorded by numerous musicians, including Peggy Lee, Frank Sinatra, and Art Garfunkel. Rolling Stone ranks the Flamingo’s version of the song #157 in their list of the 500 Greatest Songs of All Time.

“I Only Have Eyes For You.” The Lord has His own version of this golden oldie: “you are valuable in My eyes.” The *you* in our text is singular, not plural. It’s *you* not *you all*. Singular *you* denotes a focus that is individual and intimate, particular and personal. The same specific concern for *you* comes in Isaiah 43:1 where God says, “I have called you by name, you are Mine.” His care is cosmic and universal, to be sure, but to emphasize the value God places on you, He employs twenty-five second person word forms in Isaiah 43:1-7. Over and over again it is you, you, you...you! “You are valuable in My eyes.”

Those who first received these words were far away from home. These Israelites were in Babylon, and Babylon said, “You are nothing in my eyes.” Babylon was distant, aloof, cold, and calculating. IT called Judean exiles state slaves and prisoners, cogs in their vast and ever-growing political machine.

The Question of the Day is this: **Where do I find my value?**

To get at this, let me take you to a place where many children have come and gone with some pretty amazing childhood memories. The amusement park, rides, cotton candy, and other amazing things. I am not a fan of the rides that spin in circles or even go upside down, but the food, I do like the food. However in some amusement parks, there is something else that is always intriguing for a little person: the fun house mirrors. Pastor Reed Lessing describes a family tradition that he had as a kid in this way: “As a child, one of our family rituals every summer was going to Elitch Gardens in Denver, Colorado. The park had all kinds of rides and enough sticky cotton candy to amaze my little life. But what fascinated me most were all the fun house mirrors. Some mirrors would make me look tall and skinny. Others would make me look short and fat. And still others would make me look ugly and creepy. None of them reflected who I really was.” Have you ever been amongst fun house mirrors? They never do reflect the real you.

And neither do the mirrors that surround us. Just turn on the TV, surf the net, go to a mall, pick up People Magazine, or some other magazine at the grocery counter. There we see perfect people with perfect families and perfect marriages and delighting in perfect jobs. And when these images seductively summon us, what do we see? We see that we don’t measure up. You name it—we don’t have it. Addicted to how the

world sees us, we begin feeling tall and skinny, short and fat, ugly and creepy. If we look into these mirrors long enough, we begin to languish, lose heart, and feel worthless.

And when we feel worthless, we not only discount ourselves, we begin discounting everybody else. You name them—we discount them: spouse, child, colleague, parent, boss. When we feel like nothing, we treat other people like nothing. We sell each other off for cut-rate prices, slashing and burning reputations. Obsessed with what we don't have, we get stuck in the same gossip, the silent stares, and the jungle of judgment.

Let me be as clear as possible. How you stack up in eyes of others does not reflect your true value. Your value comes from the Lord, and He says, "You are valuable in My eyes." It is the same *you* – singular, not plural. Specific, reserved, and exact. It is *you!* And *you* are incredibly valuable. The Hebrew word here, translated "valuable," denotes significance, stature, and substance. You are prized, priceless, preferred, and precious.

Let me explain a bit more. Value is based on ownership. A car that is owned by Aaron Rodgers, Michael Jordan, Brad Pitt is going to be worth a whole lot more than the Geo Prizm that I learned to drive in, which got its own scrapes, dents, dings, damages, and even stuck on a stump and in a snowbank. That car's worth is connected to the fame of the owner or lack thereof; which means not a whole lot. I'm sure my dad sold that car for not more than a few hundred bucks.

So value is based on ownership? The Lord says in Isaiah 43:6-7, "Bring my sons from afar and My daughters from the end of the earth. All upon whom My name is called, and whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and whom I made." God has created and claimed, fashioned and formed us. We are His sons and His daughters.

And value is based on how much someone is willing to pay? God says in Isaiah 43:4, "And I will give people in exchange for you, and nations in exchange for your life." When Israel passed through the Red Seas, the Lord for it with the life of Egyptians. Now Israel is about to leave their captivity through the Persian King Cyrus and God will pay for it with the life of Babylonians. Our God is willing to lay down people's lives for us.

But why trust the Lord to place value for us? Just who is this God anyway? Isaiah 40:26 says that He calls every star by name. The Milky Way is 104,000 light-years across and contains 100 billion stars. To count them one by one would take a person 3,000 years. According to the latest probings of the Hubble Space Telescope, there are hundreds of billions more galaxies in the universe! And this God calls each of them by name! This is the God who says in Isaiah 43:1, "I have redeemed you, I have called you by name," and in verse 4, "You are valuable in my eyes."

But there is more. His Word is everlasting—Isaiah 40:8; His righteousness is everlasting—51:8; His love is everlasting—54:8; His covenant is everlasting—55:3. No wonder Isaiah 40:28 states, "He is the everlasting God." This is the One who says, "I only have eyes for you."

Who? *You!* Still you, just you, always you, forever and ever...you! Are what? Valuable, cherished, infinite worth. Where? No in the eyes of Babylon. There we are nameless numbers and state-owned statistics. Where are we valuable? Not in our eyes. When our eyes are wide open, we see our duplicity, dishonesty, idolatry, and ongoing sin.

So where are we valuable? God says, "In my eyes!" To quote Luther, "Although in supreme trials you seem nothing in your eyes and are condemned as one cast off by the eyes of the world, and even in those of your brothers (as happened to us on the part of our Enthusiast brothers). Fear not. In My eyes I regard you as a precious jewel."

But there is more. In the baptismal flood, God claimed you as His own, and on a hill called Calvary, He paid for you with His Son, Jesus. This means God has more than just eyes for you.

He has hands and feet for you, nailed to a cross. He has a head for you, crowned with thorns. He has a side for you, thrust through by a spear.

But there is *more*. God has a heart for you. Jesus says, "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you" (John 15:9). God has ears for you. Jesus says, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7). And God has body and blood for you. Jesus says, "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins" (cf. Mark 14:23).

Isaiah testifies to this one indisputable fact. Our God loves these lyrics: "The moon may be high, but I can't see a thing in the sky. I only have eyes for you." Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior, our Lenten King, the one who has eyes for you. Amen.