

I.N.I.

Summer Sermon 2024

Isaiah 44:6-8

In Christ Jesus, our Rock in whom we trust, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

How safe do you feel in this world full of turmoil and change? Well a term that is used when people feel very safe and secure is “rock-solid.” If you have a rock-solid friend, you can rely on him in good times and bad, to be there for help.

Hopefully your marriage is rock-solid, based on Christ’s forgiving love and His powerful Word.

Also we hope that our future financial investments are rock-solid, safe from the financial upheavals and volatility of today’s market.

But above all we hope and pray that our trust is in our rock-solid Lord and Savior.

And that is what Isaiah says to us today:

THE LORD IS OUR ROCK!

I: He is Rock Solid in His care for us.

Isaiah is saying in chapters 40-44 that in spite of the unfaithfulness of His people, God remained faithful. He had chosen Israel as His children and promised them His blessings. In chapter 40 we read these familiar and so comforting words: **"COMFORT, YES, COMFORT MY PEOPLE!" SAYS YOUR GOD. SPEAK COMFORT TO JERUSALEM, AND CRY OUT TO HER, THAT HER WARFARE IS ENDED, THAT HER INIQUITY IS PARDONED; FOR SHE HAS RECEIVED FROM THE LORD'S HAND DOUBLE FOR ALL HER SINS."**

In chapter 41 we read these amazing words: **FEAR NOT, FOR I AM WITH YOU; BE NOT DISMAYED, FOR I AM YOUR GOD. I WILL STRENGTHEN YOU, YES, I WILL HELP YOU, I WILL UPHOLD YOU WITH MY RIGHTEOUS RIGHT HAND.'**

And in chapter 43 we read these awesome words: **BUT NOW, THUS SAYS THE LORD, WHO CREATED YOU, O JACOB, AND HE WHO FORMED YOU, O ISRAEL: "FEAR NOT, FOR I HAVE REDEEMED YOU; I HAVE CALLED YOU BY YOUR NAME; YOU ARE MINE. WHEN YOU PASS THROUGH THE WATERS, I WILL BE WITH YOU; AND THROUGH THE RIVERS, THEY SHALL NOT OVERFLOW YOU. WHEN YOU WALK THROUGH THE FIRE, YOU SHALL NOT BE BURNED, NOR SHALL THE FLAME SCORCH YOU. FOR I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD, THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL, YOUR SAVIOR;**

As chaplain for Messiah Lutheran in Eau Claire I have used these words so many, many times to bring comfort, confidence and consolation to members who are going through physical, emotional and spiritual struggles, loss and pain.

And now in chapter 44, the first verse of our sermon text, the Lord assures His people that He alone can and has done these things because there is no one like Him in His **CARE FOR THEM**. Therefore there is no reason for fear and trembling.

The Lord mentions 5 names for Himself that show His miraculous, awe-inspiring care for us:

- 1) King
- 2) Redeemer
- 3) Lord of Hosts
- 4) First and Last
- 5) God

Then in verse 8 He calls Himself ROCK!

In these names we see God's **rock-solid care for us**.

King: The Lord was Israel's perfect, ever-wise King who ruled over Old Testament Israel. And yes, a king rules, but more importantly a king fights battles in defense of and on behalf of his subjects. Our Lord as King met our enemy Satan and defeated Him on the cross and in the empty tomb. He fought our battle for us. He took away Satan's power over us, the power of sin, by removing our sins. He paid the penalty of death for our sins. He took our place and served our time being damned for us, separated from the Father, on the cross. His victory over sin and death gives us life and peace with God. He also does rule us as King. But His rule is a rule of love through His forgiving Word.

Redeemer: A redeemer is one who sets a person free, by paying a ransom, a price. When God set Israel free from Egypt He declared: **'I AM THE LORD; I WILL BRING YOU OUT FROM UNDER THE BURDENS OF THE EGYPTIANS, I WILL RESCUE YOU FROM THEIR BONDAGE, AND I WILL REDEEM YOU WITH AN OUTSTRETCHED ARM AND WITH GREAT JUDGMENTS.** The word "redeem" appears 24 times in chapters 40-66 of Isaiah. The word emphasizes the activity of God. He and He alone can redeem His people who made themselves slaves by their own sin and rebellion. Jesus redeemed us with the greatest ransom price ever paid: His life, His shed blood upon the cross. We are bought back and set free forever!

LORD of Hosts: Jehovah. The "I AM Who I AM God" signifies His covenant, His promise of grace, mercy, compassion and forgiveness to us. The Lord has the hosts of angel armies together with all the rest of creation in heaven and on earth at His command to do His bidding. He has all power!

First and Last: Our God is everlasting, without a beginning and without an end. Before Israel was a nation, before Moses, before Abraham before Adam, before the world began, before He spoke, "In the beginning", He was there. And when He brings history and this world to an end He will still be there to recreate a new heaven and a new earth for us to dwell with Him eternally.

God: The Lord alone is worthy of this title. Luther writes: "A god means one from which we are to expect all good and to which we are to take refuge in all distress." Our Triune God alone is the source of all that is good and He alone cares and provides refuge for us in or distress. He is the only God that exists! More on this in our third point.

II: He is Rock Solid in His prophesies.

We read verse 7: **AND WHO CAN PROCLAIM AS I DO? THEN LET HIM DECLARE IT AND SET IT IN ORDER FOR ME, SINCE I APPOINTED THE ANCIENT PEOPLE. AND THE THINGS THAT ARE COMING AND SHALL COME, LET THEM SHOW THESE TO THEM.**

In this verse the Lord assures His people that there is no one like Him in His promises and prophecies that He has given them. Not only has our God taken care of us in the past and promises to do so for the future, but our God alone is able to predict what will happen in the future. Our God alone foretells His actions before they take place. Can any god created by human beings claim to do that? No! All man-made gods remain silent and mute about the future.

Our God is 100% correct when predicting the future. He never makes a mistake. He never has and He never will. He says His prophecies are sure even back to the ancient people, like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He prophesied that they would die if they ate of the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and they did. The devil lied and said they would not die but would be like God.

Our God prophesied that one of Eve's children would crush the head of the serpent. And even though the Devil tried with all of his might over the years to stop this from happening, he was not able to. God's promise, His prophecy came true when His Son, the Seed of the woman died and rose again crushing Satan's power over us. **BUT WHEN THE FULLNESS OF THE TIME HAD COME, GOD SENT FORTH HIS SON, BORN OF A WOMAN, BORN UNDER THE LAW, TO REDEEM THOSE WHO WERE UNDER THE LAW, THAT WE MIGHT RECEIVE THE ADOPTION AS SONS.**

Our God is issuing a challenge. If there is anyone in the past who has had a 100% correct record in predicting the future---Let him speak! Is there anyone who wants to try his hand at predicting the future and getting it right 100% of the time? Let him speak!

Our God has! His record of the past proves it. In Deuteronomy 18 the Lord says this about true and false prophets: **BUT THE PROPHET WHO PRESUMES TO SPEAK A WORD IN MY NAME, WHICH I HAVE NOT COMMANDED HIM TO SPEAK, OR WHO SPEAKS IN THE NAME OF OTHER GODS, THAT PROPHET SHALL DIE.'** AND IF YOU SAY IN YOUR HEART, 'HOW SHALL WE KNOW THE WORD WHICH THE LORD HAS NOT SPOKEN?' --"WHEN A PROPHET SPEAKS IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, IF THE THING DOES NOT HAPPEN OR COME TO PASS, THAT *IS* THE THING WHICH THE LORD HAS NOT SPOKEN; THE PROPHET HAS SPOKEN IT PRESUMPTUOUSLY; YOU SHALL NOT BE AFRAID OF HIM.

III: He is Rock Solid in His claim as the only God.

We read verse 8: **DO NOT FEAR, NOR BE AFRAID; HAVE I NOT TOLD YOU FROM THAT TIME, AND DECLARED *IT*? YOU ARE MY WITNESSES. IS THERE A GOD BESIDES ME? INDEED *THERE IS NO OTHER ROCK; I KNOW NOT ONE.* ' "**

The Lord now applies the truth to what He has said. There is no need for trembling or fear. They and we have been witnesses to the accuracy of God's prophecies. We have witnessed the fulfillment of His promises and His care for us. Even though we have sinned day after day and do not deserve His love and forgiveness He has given it to us in His Son.

IS THERE A GOD BESIDES ME? I KNOW NOT *ONE*, God declares. Our Triune God alone is the Rock. The first reference of the Lord God being a rock are the words of Moses found in Deuteronomy

32:4: **HE IS THE ROCK, HIS WORK IS PERFECT; FOR ALL HIS WAYS ARE JUSTICE, A GOD OF TRUTH AND WITHOUT INJUSTICE; RIGHTEOUS AND UPRIGHT IS HE.**

There are at least 14 references of God being a rock in the Psalms, like David's words in Psalm 18:2: **THE LORD IS MY ROCK AND MY FORTRESS AND MY DELIVERER; MY GOD, MY STRENGTH, IN WHOM I WILL TRUST; MY SHIELD AND THE HORN OF MY SALVATION, MY STRONGHOLD** and in Psalm 62:2: **HE ONLY IS MY ROCK AND MY SALVATION; HE IS MY DEFENSE; I SHALL NOT BE GREATLY MOVED.**

Jesus proclaimed that He and His words are that rock upon which we build our faith when he said these words in Matt. 7:24-25: **THEREFORE WHOEVER HEARS THESE SAYINGS OF MINE, AND DOES THEM, I WILL LIKEN HIM TO A WISE MAN WHO BUILT HIS HOUSE ON THE ROCK: AND THE RAIN DESCENDED, THE FLOODS CAME, AND THE WINDS BLEW AND BEAT ON THAT HOUSE; AND IT DID NOT FALL, FOR IT WAS FOUNDED ON THE ROCK.**

The Apostle Paul calls Jesus that rock in I Cor. 10:4: **AND ALL DRANK THE SAME SPIRITUAL DRINK. FOR THEY DRANK OF THAT SPIRITUAL ROCK THAT FOLLOWED THEM, AND THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST.**

When the flood of troubles, trials and temptations roar as a mighty river to wash away us, His people, the Lord assures us that He is the only Rock to which we can cling. He will remain ever firm and steadfast. The waters may swirl around it, but the Rock provides safety in the midst of life's surging troubles.

There is no other Rock! He alone redeemed and saved us! He alone protects and cares for us! He alone perfectly predicts our future and fulfills all of His promises. He gives us His Word! We too need to hear these words of encouragement: **DO NOT FEAR, NOR BE AFRAID.**

Our confidence and trust are built on our Lord, our King, our Redeemer, our First and Last, and our Rock! Apart from Him no safety, no redemption, no salvation exists because apart from our Triune God there is no God.

Amen.