

“Fear Not for I AM with You”

Prayer of Illumination: Prepare our hearts, O Lord, to accept your word. Silence in us any voice but your own; that, hearing, we may also obey your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (The Worship Book, 1970, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.))

**Scripture Readings:**

Isaiah 43:1-5; Romans 8:31-39

\*\*See end of devotion for full scriptures.\*\*

**Devotion:** (Illustration adapted from the writings of Edward Hays, A Book of Wonders, pp. 90-91, (2009))

This past Monday, March 23rd, Governor Whitmer’s issued Executive Order 2020-1 calling for all of us to “stay-at-home,” and the Presbytery Council of Lake Huron Presbytery issued an Advisory Statement strongly recommending to all congregations to suspend all worship and church activities until Sunday, May 10th, in order to control the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Our church’s Session has concurred with the Presbytery Council’s recommendation and has voted to suspend all church events including worship until May 10th. The Session strongly encourages all church members to comply with our governor’s order of staying at home, and sheltering in place so we can mitigate the spreading of this disease.

On this very same day of March 23rd, I happened to be reading from my own personal devotion book, A Book of Wonders, by Edward Hays. His devotion for that day which I want to share with you for this Sunday, March 29th, is entitled, “*How to Prepare for Armageddon.*” The devotion reads as follows:

*An ancient prophet said that if the end of the world, the Day of Judgment, should arrived as you are planting a tender young seedling, you should continue planting it. The basic challenge of holiness is striving daily to live each moment with grace-filled attention. God dwells only in the present moment. The ancient prophet was inspired to emphasize this divine reality by saying that even if the world and all the heavens were to come catastrophically crashing down around you, continue doing whatever it is that you are doing. Don’t fall down on your knees crying out for mercy; just continue with confidence being fully absorbed in what you’re doing in that God-soaked moment.*

**Devotional Prayer:** *God, plant me firmly in the present moment, the everyday temple in which you dwell. Glue my gypsy mind to the here and now, so in whatever I do, I shall find you there. Amen.*

**The Lord's Prayer:** (Say the prayer in unison.) Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

**Blessing:** "The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord be kind and gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24-26)

**(NIV) Isaiah 43:1-5:**

"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. 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. 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. 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. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west."

**(NIV) Romans 8:31-39:**

"What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Source: <https://www.biblegateway.com/>