

- ¹ *But now, this is what the LORD says—
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
“Fear not, 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 men in exchange for you,
and people 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.”* (NIV84)

I ONLY HAVE EYES FOR YOU!

It was written in 1934 by Henry Warren and Al Dubin. It was rerecorded by greats like Frank Sinatra and Art Garfunkel. When the Flamingos got a hold of it, their rendition of the song was ranked #157 in *Rolling Stone* magazine’s list of the 500 Greatest Songs of All Time. “I Only have Eyes for You!”

A love song written to tell of a man’s undying devotion to his love. *I Only Have Eyes for You! Are the stars out tonight? I don’t know if it’s cloudy or bright I only have eyes for you...Maybe millions of people go by, but they all disappear from view And I only have eyes for you!!*

Romantic, huh? You could do worse, guys, than to be able to tell your sweetie that when she’s around, nothing else matters, no one else matters, ‘cuz you only have eyes for her!!

Today your God pulls you to his side, looks into your eyes and tells you and shows you **“I Only Have Eyes for You!”** And if it’s a wonderful thing to have your sweetheart say those things to you, it’s eternally better to have your God show that love to you. Today as our “Singing with the Exiles” series continues, we’ll join in with those future captives to rejoice in the faithfulness and love of God. We’ll celebrate that as God says to them, he says to us also, **“I Only Have Eyes for You!”**

It’s interesting that God tells us in Isaiah chapter 43 about his eyes, because in the words just before this text he was telling us about the eyes and the ears of Israel. The very first word of our text is like a big giant arrow. “But” What happens here is related to what happened before! It’s opposite, linguists call it an adversative, but it’s related. So we better start there. What did God see back there? What was going on with the eyes and ears of Israel?

God doesn’t mince words!! He does pull any punches.

- ¹⁸ ***“Hear, you deaf;
look, you blind, and see!
¹⁹ Who is blind but my servant,
and deaf like the messenger I send?
Who is blind like the one committed to me,
blind like the servant of the LORD?
²⁰ You have seen many things, but have paid no attention;
your ears are open, but you hear nothing.”***

The eyes and ears of Israel were closed. They dismissed the blessings of the past and ignored God’s promises in the present and the future. They rejected the Lord and were filled with hopelessness and despair when their world starting collapsing around them. They turned in every direction except the Lord. They listened to every empty promise except the ones made by the one who had proven time and time again to be their Rock and Redeemer. They looked to any hero they could find except the one who was a mighty warrior on their behalf. They were blind and deaf to the Lord and that’s why the Lord was going to act in harsh judgment.

- Was it not the LORD,
against whom we have sinned?
For they would not follow his ways;
they did not obey his law.
²⁵ So he poured out on them his burning anger,
the violence of war.
It enveloped them in flames, yet they did not understand;
it consumed them, but they did not take it to heart.***

God had given Israel plenty to see - the miraculous displays of power in the presence of their captor Pharaoh, on the banks of the Red Sea and at the top of Mount Carmel. He had given them plenty of proof to hear – the kings who testified to the power of God, the words of the prophets which God caused to come true. There’s lots of evidence to accuse the Israelites of being foolishly deaf and blind. Were we on the jury, we’d convict them for sure!

Isaiah 44:1-7

But what if you sat on the jury that presides over your own life? Has God given you enough to see and hear? Are you blind and deaf, too? You might want to object, but the evidence is too overwhelming!! We've heard the promises of God spoken to us time and time again. We've got a book of his Promises that sits on our nightstand. I guess too often we prove ourselves too blind to open its pages and see its truth. We hear a message of comfort and reminder of our strength in the Lord from pulpit and Bible classroom, but do we close our ears to those opportunities by not attending or by ignoring the words of hope and love. We are living breathing testimonies to the power and strength and love of God, but too often we ignore his impact and influence in our lives and we turn a blind eye and deaf ear to the many proofs that surround us.

It's often the challenges in life that prompt us to forget God's words, to be deaf to his message of hope. It's when we see trials and hardship in this world that we close our eyes to the mighty things that God had promised and the mighty victories that he has won for us. If we are honest with ourselves, we're forced to admit that we, too, are blind and deaf to our God. If we are real with ourselves, we have to understand that the exile that God brought down on Israel should be our future, too. We, too, should be removed from our homes and from our lives and experience the burning anger of God - in a literal way. For angering God and being blind and deaf to him, we deserve to burn – eternally burn in hell.

And that brings us back to that tiny little word at the start. BUT. The adversative that points us back also points us forward. The future holds something opposite. We are blind and deaf like Israel, BUT – God is anything but blind. He sees, he loves you. **He Only Has Eyes for You.** Though we don't always put a high value on God, he put the highest value on us.

*But now, this is what the LORD says—
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.*

Value is based on ownership. You can buy a pair of basketball shoes for about \$50. If you want a nice pair of Nike Air Jordan's the price jumps up to about \$150. But if you want a pair of shoes that Michael Jordan himself owned and wore, the price skyrockets. A pair was auctioned off a few years ago that he wore in the NBA finals in 1997 for \$104,765. Value is based on ownership.

And that's good news for us, as God tells us that we are his. Because he made us and called us and redeemed us, we are his. And that gives us value. You have value because **He Only Has Eyes for You.** And that's all that matters. It doesn't matter what others see. It doesn't even matter what we see. What matters is what God sees. And he values us!

Another aspect of ownership is how much someone is willing to pay for something, right? The value of your home is kind of a meaningless number unless someone wants to pay for it, right? If you have ever moved and been socked with two mortgages you get that all too well. It's not that important how much the home is worth, what it says on the appraisal paper! That number won't put food on the table. What will is a check in your hand. What matters is what others are willing to pay right? Its real value is shown when someone is willing to cut the check.

Isaiah 44:1-7

God was willing to cut a check to save Israel. They were his chosen people and he was going to keep his promises to them.

***⁴ Since you are precious and honored in my sight,
and because I love you,
I will give men in exchange for you,
and people in exchange for your life.***

The remnant would be restored. The people would return to Jerusalem. God would *bring (his) sons from afar and (his) daughters from the ends of the earth— everyone who is called by my name.* God would topple an empire to put Cyrus his servant in power, so that the people would be returned. God traded the lives of the pagan Babylonians for the lives of his faithful people, the remnant, those who were his. He gave men in exchange for Israel.

And he does it for you as well. In many ways he trades lives for you to bless you protect you. None more clearly than when he exchanged the life of Jesus for yours. He valued you so much, **he had his eyes** so firmly **on you** that he was willing to take his eyes off Jesus. He wanted you to be with him so badly that he was willing to sacrifice his one and only Son that we might be called sons and daughters, that we might be gathered from the places we've been scattered to be a part of his family.

And this was no prisoner exchange where it's dictated by the superiors and the parties involved have no say. Jesus was a willing participant. He was willing to surrender to the flames of God's wrath, willing to unfairly carry the burdens of another's sins. Though we were the blind and deaf ones, he endured the punishment and pain, that he might give us his peace.

Jesus **Only Has Eyes for You.** And because he did, he set his eyes on the path that God laid out for him, never following his own self-serving ways, but always keeping his eyes on the goal your salvation and mine. He had ears for us, to hear our needs and the needs of others and to always respond in love. He had a mind for us that was always set on obedience and service. He had hands for us, which he used in service and then in ultimate service as he allowed them to be nailed to the cross instead of ours. He gave his head to the crown of thorns. He had a heart for you which bled in love for you!! And then when all had been given, when he had nothing more to give, he gave up his dying breath, commending his spirit to his heavenly Father.

Jesus gave himself, his all, to be our all in all! He gave until he couldn't give anymore and why? Because **He Only Has Eyes for You!**

And now he keeps on giving! Though he gave himself as a full and all sufficient sacrifice, now raised from the dead in glorious splendor, now sitting at the right hand of God, he keeps on giving! He keeps his eyes on you! He keeps on protecting and providing for you. He continually gives his ears to your prayers when he 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). He builds your faith through his holy Supper and says *“Take and eat his is my body, Take and drink, this is my blood!* (Matthew 26:26-28). He gives you strength in this world to face the challenges and gives you his assuring presence. *Surely I will be with you always to the very end of the age* (Matthew 28:19). And because he is with you, the promise that he makes through Isaiah will certainly come true in your life:

*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;*

He's the Holy One of Israel and your Holy One, too. He's the defender of Israel and your Shield and Fortress. You have value in his eyes and salvation in his blood! You have Peace here on earth and everlasting, unending incomparable joy in wait as you cash in the reward that is yours in him. Because he values you, he gives you the most valuable thing – a place with him forever. When life is hard, when troubles arise, when trials mount, don't ever forget your Savior. And don't ever forget his everlasting promise - **I Only Have Eyes for You!!** Amen.