

April 6, 2025 – Isaiah 43:1-2 – “I Belong to the Lord!”

Human beings have a desire to belong. We need to be connected to, and a part of something. So, let me ask you: Would you say: “*I GO to St. Paul’s Lutheran Church,*” or would you say: “*I BELONG to St. Paul’s Lutheran Church*”?

One word does make all the difference. “*I GO,*” says that if I go, this is the church I attend. But: “*I BELONG,*” says that I’m connected to and a part of the life of this congregation.

If you’re a Brewer fan heading to the game, you’d say: “*I’m GOING to watch a game.*” If you’re a Brewer player, you’d say: “*I BELONG to the team!*” A football game demonstrates the same thing. It’s the difference between the 60,000 fans who desperately need to exercise, and the 22 players who desperately need to rest.

Now that we’ve explained the difference, would you say: “*I GO to the Lord?*” Or would you rather say: “*I BELONG the Lord?*” Your answer speaks volumes about your relationship with him. Do you attend and watch? Or, are you connected to him because he’s a part of your life?

Isaiah 43 is a personal reminder that ... 1) *The Lord created me,* 2) *The Lord redeemed me,* and 3) *The Lord calls me by name.* Three powerful reasons you and I can say: “**I BELONG TO THE LORD!**”

(1)

This is a good place to start! You belong to the Lord because he created you as the crown of his creation. You didn’t evolve or descend from apes.

That alone shuts down the ridiculous notion: “*I can do whatever I want, whenever I want, wherever I want.*” That’s sinful, not to mention incredibly selfish.

How many times have you confessed with fellow Christians: “**I believe in God the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth**”? God created the entire world. That includes every person on earth.

Along with the miracle of life when you arrived screaming and squirming, your Lord’s personal care for you extends to: the air you breathe, the food you eat, the clothes you wear and the place you call home.

The Lord you belong to didn’t pat you on the behind and say, “*Run along! You’re on your own.*” No! He preserves, provides for and protects you each day. “**I BELONG TO THE LORD!**” because he created me just the way he wanted me to be.

(2)

The first two verses of Isaiah 43 are packed-full of thoughtful words from a God of free and faithful grace. He created your physical life. “*Amazing! Wonderful!*” you say. Absolutely! But what’s more amazing and wonderful is that he also created a spiritual life in you ... turning you from sinner into saint. Changing you from his arch-enemy to his favorite child.

That’s incredible news since we’re all guilty of defying and disobeying God. We’re all lawbreakers who deserve the full force of God’s punishing judgment. We’re sinners, all of us.

Like Isaiah, we can hope for some kind of escape. But wishing it won’t make it happen. A God of free and faithful grace would do the unexpected and say: “**I have redeemed you.**”

To redeem is to ransom, to buy back. Redeem implies that someone is trapped and unable to rescue themselves.

- That was true of Israel’s slavery in Egypt.

- That was true of Israel's captivity by the Assyrians
- That was true of Judah, the Babylonian's prisoners of war.
- That is true for you and me and every sinner.

Do you recall the Catechism's familiar words:

"He redeemed me a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil"?

Not only did you memorize those words, but you believe them.

"I BELONG TO THE LORD!" because he ransomed me, **not with gold or silver, but with his holy precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.**" No expense was spared. No sacrifice was too great. The Father sent his Son to redeem our souls. Jesus paid the debt we owe, because we owed a debt we could never repay. We're forgiven and acquitted of all charges. We were on death row, but now we're fully pardoned.

Can you understand this love? *It's incomprehensible!*

Can you picture this love? *It's indescribable!*
What can you compare this love to? *It's incomparable!*

Nobody can. The Holy Spirit puts faith in your heart to believe what you can't comprehend and trust what you can't describe. That's how you can be sure of Jesus' promise: **"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved."** Faith is a gift from God that needs to be appreciated and maintained. Water it with Jesus, the Living Water. Feed it with Jesus, the Bread of Life.

"I BELONG TO THE LORD!" because Jesus ransomed me from those nasty kidnappers ... sin, death and Satan.

(3)

There's a special feeling when someone takes the time to learn your name. The Lord knows

your name because he's made a personal investment in you. You are valuable to him. You aren't just *"Hey you!"* or *"What's your name?"*
The 3rd reason we can say: **"I BELONG TO THE LORD!"** is because he calls me by name.

That did not happen by your hard work or my good intentions. We didn't initiate this relationship. He claimed you as his own in the waters of your Baptism when he got to know your name and attached his name to you.

The Lord we belong to doesn't promise that we'll escape every difficulty and pass-through life without any scrapes or bruises. The water and fire in Isaiah 43 symbolize all the dangers we can anticipate in this life.

But the Lord still pledges his protection and promises to deliver. He delivered his people through the waters of the Red Sea in their exodus from Egypt. He delivered those three men from Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace without even a single hair being singed, or the slightest smell of smoke on their clothes.

- Maybe, he'll deliver you by giving you the strength to keep going.
- Maybe, he'll deliver you by giving you a rescue or healing.
- Maybe, he'll deliver you by taking you home to heaven.

No matter how he does it, God makes it personal, so you can make it personal when you say: **"I BELONG TO THE LORD!"** After all, he created and redeemed you, and calls you by name!