

God's help has come to us in and through Jesus Christ, God's Son.
"I myself will help you...your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel" (v14)

Through Jesus' redemption, we know the Lord is our God (v13a)
Through Jesus we are God's Holy people, with the privilege of serving Him (v8-9)

You may have noticed that our Bible reading is a series of **"I will"** statements from the Lord and **"you will"** instructions to His people.

We are not helpless if the Lord is our God. He is our helper.
If we are his servants – he will provide the help we need.
So do not fear. Don't arm wrestle against the Lord; but put your strength into his greater strength – hand in hand – go forward in faith and victory.

Pastor Andrew

Today would have been our Church Anniversary & Gift Day. This will be rearranged later in the year. Until then, perhaps you would like to put aside your regular tithe / offering and any special gift for the Gift Day. We look forward to meeting together soon for our rearranged Church Anniversary!

NO BIRTHDAYS THIS WEEK

BENEDICTION

"He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak...Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength... May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word" (Isaiah 40.29,31; 2 Thessalonians 2.16-17)

ROCHFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Welcome to

CHURCH At HOME

Sunday 3rd May 2020

Read through this outline and join with everyone else at 11am

Hymn (to sing or read)

God is our strength and refuge,
Our present help in trouble,
And therefore we will not fear,
Though the earth should change!
Though mountains shake and tremble,
Though swirling floods are raging,
God the Lord of hosts is with us evermore!

There is a flowing river,
Within God's holy city,
God is in the midst of her –
She shall not be moved!
God's help is swiftly given,
Thrones vanish at His presence –
God the Lord of hosts is with us evermore!

Come see the works of our maker,
Learn of his deeds all-powerful,
Wars will cease across the world
When he shatters the spear!
Be still and know your Creator,
Uplift Him in the nations –
God the Lord of hosts is with us evermore!

Introduction

We often sing this hymn, based on Psalm 46, at Remembrance Services, yet it seems appropriate as we battle with the invisible enemy of Covid-19.

We are going to look together at a time when God helped his people recorded in Isaiah 41, but before we do, let's pray:

Prayer (audibly or quietly in your heart)

*Almighty God, Heavenly Father, Lord of hosts,
Thank you for your presence with me and the help you have given me in recent days. Help me to be still and know that you are God.
Calm my fears and enlarge my confidence and faith in you.
There is no one like you in holiness, love, and power.
When I take a moment to consider all you have done for me, I entrust the challenges facing me today, and in the days to come to you.
Forgive my sin and help me to live a life of faith in you.
Help those at the forefront of the battle against Covid-19.
Give strength and peace and ultimate victory in this battle,
In Jesus Name, and for His glory.
Amen.*

Let's say the Lord's Prayer together

BIBLE VERSES FOR THE WEEK

"Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41.10)

"I am the Lord your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, 'Do not fear; I will help you'" (Isaiah 41.13)

"The Lord our helper"

Are you any good at arm wrestling? Hand in hand, muscles tensed, who will prevail? Our Bible passage (Isaiah 41.1-20) describes the military might of a new foe named Cyrus **"from the East"** (v2). There was much fear. There was a climate of fear, like in our society today. The islands feared (v5) as did God's people. Our Bible verses above, are

the instructions the Lord gave not to fear. This instruction comes 365 times in the Bible because God knows how fearful we can become and how we need reminding each day not to fear.

Two reasons are given, here, why we should not fear:

- i. Because God is with us (v10)
- ii. Because God will help us (v13)

It is reassuring to have someone there with us – but how much more comforting to know the one at our side is able to help, and promises...

"I will help you..."

a) ...UP – when you are down

His mighty right hand lifts us up when we in the "slough of despond" – dismaying at the situation

The nations try and renew their strength (v1) but the Lord gives strength to his people, **"I will strengthen you and help you"** (v10) He takes our right hand (our strength) and upholds us with his right hand (His Strength)

The nations nail down their idols, so they don't topple over (v7b). In contrast, the Lord steadies us when our faith is wobbling!

b) ...THROUGH – when there seems no way

We have just been told the lockdown will be at least another three weeks. This invisible enemy is a tricky enemy to overcome but the Lord is with us to help every day. He is the "I am" – not the "I was"

"Those who wage war against you will be as nothing" (v12b)

"I will make... springs within the valleys" (v18a)

The help of the Lord will see us through, providing what we need.

c) ...BE – what he has called you to be

In the uncertain times caused through King Cyrus the Persian, the Lord had plans for his people to fulfil His purposes. He was going to make them strong to bring about change.

"I will make you ... into a threshing sledge..." (v15-16)

The help the Lord gives, the strength He provides, is to be put to work to become what He wants to make of His people.