



## Week of September 3, 2018

### Scripture Reading: Isaiah 35:4-7a

This devotional thought is the first in a weekly offering that will typically be based on the Scripture text for the upcoming Sunday's sermon. While the weekly devotionals will be titled a *Word for the Week*, that last word might more aptly be spelled "weak." For all our necessary and sometimes unnecessary attempts to be anything but, acknowledging our weakness and our need for God's help is crucial. As Adam and Eve learned, though there are a great many things we can do, becoming gods is not one of them. We are not immortal, nor as powerful, wise, and wonderful as we sometimes like to pretend. Like Adam and Eve when they stepped out of the Garden, we find ourselves living in an unimaginably immense universe, one full of forces and challenges that, for all of our incredible abilities, have the capacity to impede, overpower, even annihilate us. We are vulnerable.

This recognition of vulnerability was the heart of the issue for those to whom Isaiah 35 was first proclaimed. Saved from the overwhelming power of the Assyrians in 701 B.C., beaten and taken into captivity by the Babylonians in 587 B.C., and returning through the desert from exile to face the difficult task of rebuilding the temple and their lives in 539 B.C., the Israelites knew vulnerability, struggle, and fear. "Say to those who are of a fearful heart," proclaims the prophet, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God!"

What a wonderful word for us as we face the fears and anxieties of our lives. It is okay, even good, to acknowledge our weaknesses, worries, and concerns. It is okay, even important, to do as the Apostle Peter urges in 1 Peter 5:7 and "Cast all your anxiety on him [God], because he cares for you." It is crucial to know that God is here, with us, as we venture forward to face the challenges and opportunities in our lives and the world. The prophet's word is one for us to hear and heed: "Be strong, do not fear, here (wherever 'here' is for you right now) is your God!"

### Prayer:

*Almighty God, thank you that you are here with me, with us, right now. Grant me the courage and confidence to venture forward into the challenges and opportunities before me trusting you, strong in the strength of the Holy Spirit, to do your will, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

### Something(s) to try:

- Name in prayer something you are anxious about and ask God for the mustard seed of faith you need to trust him with it.
- Name in prayer something you need to do that you are anxious about, ask God for the strength, the courage, or whatever it is you need to actually do it, and then go and do it, make it happen, get it done, or at least try.
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### Memory/Meditation Verse:

"Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God!'" Isaiah 35:4a