



THIS IS YOUR SPACE TO GROW

Isaiah 41:10 (NRSV)

“do not fear, for I am with you,
do not be afraid, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

REFLECTION POINTS
10 APRIL 2020

BACKGROUND

The context of this one verse is a period of about 35 years in Jewish history between 550 and 515 BCE. The people had faced devastation at the hands of the Babylonians and many of the Jewish people were now living in pagan lands, dispersed. Although they didn't go hungry and were free to make money in Babylon, it was the spiritual and cultural destruction that was crippling.

Some people inevitably assimilated into the Babylonian culture and the loss of land was felt acutely by the people of God. But the covenant God made with the people of Israel was all encompassing. It wasn't a matter of separating faith, culture, history, language, economics, politics etc into the silos that we seem to manage today. The whole of the community's life and way of being was wrapped up and embraced within this covenantal understanding between God and the people.

The prophet Isaiah – known as Second Isaiah who is thought to have written chapters 40-55 – is calling the people back to God and the all embracing covenant. They will need to show courage, they will need to face the unknown, but there is hope – the message is that God is always present and that there has never been a time when God has not been present. Even though the people have lost the structures that helped them to be and live as the people of God, there is still hope.

The people have been stripped back and are vulnerable. But God is still present and there is still hope.

POINTS TO PONDER

- We are being forced to strip back and leave structures that we know – acknowledge what you are missing – lament is a normal part of life and that's why the psalms are full of them. It's ok to feel that vulnerability. Remember pastoral support is always available from Rev Claire, Megan and Scott.
- Where do you see the hope in this current situation?
- We are a dispersed people – we are not able to physically gather together, but we are still gathering. What does this say about the presence of God?

JOHN BELL OF THE IONA COMMUNITY:

*Don't be afraid, my love is stronger,
my love is stronger than your fear.
Don't be afraid, my love is stronger,
and I have promised to be always near.*