

4-28-2022

## Reflections on Isaiah 63:7-9

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ISSN: 2472-2596 (print)

ISSN: 2472-260X (online)

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### Recommended Citation

Milazzo, Maria. 2022. Reflections on Isaiah 63:7-9. *Obsculta* 15, (1) : 130-132.

<https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/obsculta/vol15/iss1/17>.

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# Reflections of Isaiah 63:7-9

by Maria Milazzo

## **ABSTRACT:**

This reflection for a homily given at a virtual midday prayer breaks open the Scripture reading of Isaiah 63:7-9. The scripture reading leads us to reflecting upon God's mercy and goodness in our lives, both in the good and challenging times.

## **SYNOD:**

One of the main themes of the Synod is "speaking out." Synodal dialogue insists on the open and honest contributions of all the People of God and we must be aware of those who are marginalized or whose voices are not being heard or welcomed at the table. These social structures affect the way in which we see God's goodness and mercy.



Isaiah 63 verses 7-9 beautifully depict the good and merciful God who loves His people, saves them from any affliction, and lifts them up out of the darkest of times, bringing them hope. We are all children of God and God knows that even in our sin, we are not unworthy and are capable of redemption. But one cannot solely focus on this goodness without reflecting upon the hardship and most difficult moments in our lives. Verses 1-6 of Isaiah 63 give a powerful and fearsome image of God as a warrior after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. These verses speak of brutal bloodshed, anger, and vindication. God seems far from the good and merciful God we see in verses 7-9. His anger shows no mercy, a complete contradiction of what we see in the following verses. In fact, verses 7-9 are a prayer for the return of God's favor. It is the Israelites recalling the God who saved them in the time of exile, showing them mercy and pity.

When life is good, it is easy to feel embraced by the goodness of God. Joy and happiness fill our hearts when we are surrounded by those we love, when we engage in meaningful work and healthy relationships, and take the time for our own self-care and renewal. But do we feel the same embrace of God's goodness in times of violence, destruction, oppression, injustice, and fear? Do we see God's mercy when social structures do little to give voice and justice to the marginalized? Do we see God's love when we see leaders model sinful acts of hatred, racism, or sexism? It is in fact amidst these very times that we must strive to find God's goodness, mercy, and love.

Its not easy. Amidst a year of social injustice, a global pandemic, and what seems like never-ending violence and unrest, we are weary, but are called to recall the loving deeds and glorious acts of our God. This phrase of verse 9 particularly struck me: "It was not an envoy or a messenger, but his presence that saved them." God's presence must simply be enough. We are always in the presence of God, even amidst trials and tribulations, injustice and pandemics. God is there to lift and carry us up. God is in the frontline workers and in those who strive to give voice to the voiceless and oppressed. God is also in a child's smile, a grandparent's story, a home-cooked meal - in all those who minister to us in unexpected ways. We must be aware of the goodness and hardship that has brought us to where we are, and realize that

God's abundant mercy, love, and grace has been and will continue to be there through it all. As we heard in Psalm 103, "Bless the LORD, my soul; and do not forget all his gifts." God's presence is a gift we cannot ignore and what will inspire us to continue to do the work in the months ahead.

