

'I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.'

Isaiah 46:4b:

Second reading Psalm 68:19-20: "Praise be to the Lord, to God our Saviour,
who daily bears our burdens.

Our God is a God who saves;
from the Sovereign LORD comes escape from death."

1. We have never had more uncertainty at the start of a year.

Isaiah lived in similar times: the empire of Babylon was falling, the city needed to be evacuated, and its idols were being carried by the people.

Chapter 46 is part of visions about the fall of Babylon. In that situation, the gods (idols) don't help – they're a burden; lots of dragging, hauling and pulling required.

Then and now, old certainties are failing; great powers are not what they seemed to be.

2. To all this Isaiah opposes the LORD, the God of Israel: he is not being carried – he carries his people!

The irony is that we have to protect the NHS, which exists to protect us. With the LORD it is not like that. He protects us: He has done so always (vs 3b) and he will continue to do so (vs 4).

Think of the poem about the footsteps in the sand. When it was hard, there was just one pair of steps left, His.

3. Isaiah talks about nations; it is also true for our personal lives

God leads history as he leads us. God carries us. He also carries his church. Deacons and other leaders should not carry heavy burdens...

This does not guarantee that nothing will happen! But he is with us. Immanuel. (Think back to the miracle of Christmas.)

God is unique (vs 5). Will we allow him to carry us?

4. Do we have idols? What would we like to save from a house fire?
 - What will bring us happiness / protection in the new year?
 - Idol = everything made by humans in which we put our trust.
 - We can be impressed by technology, science leaders - but it is all temporary.

It won't stand! It needs to be carried.

Let's allow God to carry us.

5. Does this make us passive? No way! We are expected to lead a Christian life and to contribute to the church. Yet in His strength.

Is your life hard? Fearful of 2021? God wants to carry you. He is in fact already doing so.

This year the church gets a new minister, but he is not the one who will carry us! That's God alone. So for the new year, for our life as Christians, the question is: to carry or to be carried! Will you worry and work hard, or 'trust and obey'? Psalm 68:20 again.

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