

Talk: Isaiah 49:1-7, Holy Trinity Frogmore 2/7/6

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NB: This is what I prepared, but what I actually said was a little different - listen to the audio to see how!

Do you realise what you've got in Jesus?

There must have been a day, one day, when David Beckham was a child, and his parents saw him playing football, looked at each other and said: "hang on, do you realise what we've got here?"

Not just any old boy playing football - but a footballing genius.

But we don't always realise what we've got, even when it's staring us in the face.

And this morning I want to ask you: Do you realise what you've got in Jesus?

Do you realise what you've got in Jesus?

Isaiah

We're having a series of sermons looking at the Bible Book Isaiah. And the book Isaiah helps us to understand about Jesus - who he is, and what he has done for us.

prophet

Isaiah was a prophet, from around 740-700 years before Jesus.

He was a man who had had an incredible vision of God - he had seen the awesome nature of God, the spiritual blindness of his people, God's judgement on their sin, and God's grace - his love and favour towards them that they just didn't deserve.

The job of a prophet was to bring God's people God's message, which almost always was a message for today: calling them back to God.

Now in chapter 40 and onwards, Isaiah looks to the future.

A few years before, he had seen the people of the northern part of the land, Israel, being taken away into captivity by armies from Assyria.

Now he proclaimed that in years to come Babylon would do the same to the southern kingdom, Judah - where he lived. But: it was not "all over" for the people of God - God would provide a way back to him: there would be rescue, God would keep his promises.

How would this happen? The Servant would do it.

Servant

Isaiah introduces the Servant.

There are four passages, in chapters 42, 49, 50, 53 with songs about the Servant, linked by the material inbetween.

Now what does a servant do? He or she obeys his master, and serves - doing the dirty jobs.

Being a servant is about obedience and service.

A new Superman film is coming out soon. Superman spends most of his time as Clark Kent, the mild mannered newspaper reporter. In order to rescue and save - he has to enter a phone box, and transform into: Superman!!!!

God's Superman is revealed in these chapters - but when he saves, he is still 'the servant' - the suffering servant - despised and rejected by people. It's not til later that he's seen in all his glory.

Jesus

700 years after Isaiah, a child was born, in a backwater. He grew up looking not-particularly special.

Then for a short while he was incredibly popular - he taught huge crowds with a message which had authority and power - he healed people, and demonstrated divine power in all sorts of ways. But then, he was “despised & rejected,” and put on trial for his life - the crowds shouted: “Crucify him” - which they did, and he was killed on cross.

And then this Jesus was Alive again: to the amazement of his followers, even tho had told them it would happen.

This Jesus was Isaiah’s servant - and the Servant had accomplished all that was said of him.

But: still we’re embarrassed to mention his name in public.

Still we put out trust and time and money into pensions and savings and houses and cars and jobs - instead of him.

Still you won’t bring your friends to the eXplore course to hear about him

Do you realise what you’ve got in Jesus? Do you know what you’re ignoring/rejecting if you’re ignoring/rejecting Jesus?

Isaiah tells us - and I’ve got three questions to help us find the answer:

Does Jesus display God’s glory to the world? (1-4)

Question 1: Does Jesus display God’s glory to the world?

does he?

Does Jesus, that man born in Bethlehem, who lived, died on a cross, and rose again to life - does that Jesus, more than anyone or any thing before or after, show the world how wonderful God is?

Some would say that God has no glory - there’s nothing great about God. Others that all religions give us a *clouded* insight into the unknowable; Many just show with their lives that they think Jesus is OK, but ignorable.

And our witness is poor, isn’t it? If Jesus showed God’s glory - wouldn’t we be shouting it from the rooftops?

God says yes

Does Jesus display God’s glory to the world?

Through Isaiah, God answers the question: You bet he does.

Here in this chapter, God the Father has a conversation with his beloved Son, who will be the Servant - and Isaiah publishes this conversation, so that the ends of the earth can hear it, and know God’s plan.

Israel

Chapter 48 has reminded us that the nation Israel - the people of God - are useless to him in his purposes for the world. They haven’t brought glory to his name, but shame.

The Servant speaks

But now the Servant speaks: 49:1 “**Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations:**” - his audience is the whole world.

“**Before I was born the LORD called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name.**” It was always God’s purpose for the Son of God to become a human being.

v. 2 “**He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver.**” God is going to war - but the weapon is his voice, his Word - and so has prepared his servant for a preaching ministry.

v.3 “**He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendour."**”

Not the original Israel - they've failed - but the servant is the New Israel - the new channel of God's blessing to the world - the new way in which the world will see the wonder, the completely awesome wonder, of God.

Does Jesus display God's glory to the world? Oh Yes.

Jesus

Jesus' teaching shows us how wonderful God is - with it's authority and power to challenge and change us;

Jesus' actions show God's glory: with God's divine power at work.

And most of all we see God's glory in Jesus' terrible suffering and death on the cross - because it is here (as a later servant song tells us) that God makes freedom from hell possible for men and women.

Look at Jesus, and you can see how wonderful the real living and powerful God is. Look at Jesus - in his death on the cross. Look at Jesus - now risen from death and alive as the King of Kings in heaven. Look at him (in your mind, as he's made known in the Bible) and see the wonder, the splendour of God.

Jesus needed to know?

Now just notice for a minute: as well as us needing to know this - I think this was written for Jesus.

As a human being he went through the toughest of times. Many deserted him, and the crowds shouted "crucify".

All the time Jesus showed the obedience and service of 'the servant'. But what would help him to stand fast, in all the troubles?

Amongst other things, his Father, in his loving care and providence, had provided for him, 700 years earlier, Isaiah chapter 49. Jesus would have memorised it as part of the Scripture as he grew up, and now it was for him: he was the servant, it was his conversation with his Father: v.4 **"But I said, 'I have laboured to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing. Yet what is due to me is in the LORD's hand, and my reward is with my God.'**"

Yes it looked disastrous, and a waste of time, as Jesus was led out to be crucified - but: he trusted his Father's plan and reward. He would, by being lifted up on the cross, be **"[the] servant, Israel, in whom [God] will display [his] splendour"**

And you?

Does Jesus display God's glory to the world? Yes.

So: What are you going to do about it?

Sometimes we sing: "I will proclaim, the glory of the risen Lord, who once was slain to reconcile men to God" / "Tell out my soul, the glory of the Lord"

Will we do that? Will we let people know the splendour of God, in the face of Jesus Christ? Evangelism is not for "someone else". If you trust in Jesus, then Evangelism - telling people the Good News of Jesus - is for you.

And it's easy to start - you don't need to be Billy Graham.

Here's some advice adapted from a youthwork book we've been looking at with ReFuel leaders:

Five steps to get going with evangelism with a friend - or colleague or whoever:

1. Tell your friend you go to a homegroup
2. Tell them you go to church
3. Tell them you're a Christian
4. Tell them one reason why you're a Christian

5. Ask them if they would be interested in finding out more.

It's easy to start, isn't it?

Does Jesus display God's glory to the world? Yes.

Will you help your friends to see God's glory in Jesus?

Does Jesus bring salvation to the world? (5-6)

Question number two: Does Jesus bring salvation to the world?

does he?

Maybe you don't think you need salvation? Maybe you think crystals can save you?

And if Jesus did bring salvation to the world, wouldn't you be doing something about it, you Christians, helping people get that rescue?

God says yes

Does Jesus bring salvation to the world? Oh yes, to the *whole* world: he is the only way to God.

The conversation continues between the LORD and his servant: v.5:

“And now the LORD says --

he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself,

for I am honoured in the eyes of the LORD

and my God has been my strength --” Jesus, honoured by his Father, was born to bring the Jews back to God - and many did return to him, even though many rejected him.

But *just* the Jews? v. 6 **“[the LORD] says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may [be] my salvation [in the Hebrew] to the ends of the earth.”**

Does Jesus bring salvation to the world? Yes - to Jews and to Gentiles - in Jerusalem and to the ends of the earth.

we need salvation

You see: everyone in the world needs salvation.

God exists, and it's God's world, and he's made us to live under his rule. He's made us to run the world his way, and to have relationships that match his pattern. It's a wonderful design - but we love to mess it up.

If I had a video tape of your life, or my life, we'd be happy with the edited highlights being shown, but we'd run a mile if the rest was on the screen. You know you've rejected God and his ways, don't you?

And God has said that he will repay us for abandoning and rejecting him. Death will be our payment - Physical and spiritual death - we deserve to be cut off from him forever for the way we have lived. Hell is our destination.

So we need rescue. And God says to the Servant - to the Lord Jesus Christ: **“I will ... make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may [be] my salvation to the ends of the earth.”**

Chapter 53, another servant song, describes what was going to happen when the Servant died:

53:5 **“he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”**

Was that for you? Did Jesus die, and take away your sins?

He did, and you need to receive it from him.

Perhaps you have already: then let me ask you: what are you going to do about it? Keep it to yourself? Or copy him, and in obedience and service, make his salvation known. If you haven't asked Jesus for his salvation, you need to. Make up your mind to ask me about it afterwards.

Does Jesus bring salvation to the world? Yes.

Is Jesus exalted before the people of the world? (7)

Last question: is Jesus exalted before the people of the world?

is he?

Is he seen as great, put on a pedestal, praised and glorified, by everyone in the world?

No, he's not. But he will be.

he will be

Back to the conversation, between God and the Servant, that we're privileged to hear, thanks to Isaiah: v.7: "**This is what the LORD says -- the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel -- to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers**" - yes, Jesus was despised and abhorred by the leaders - the Jewish leaders, and the Gentile leaders.

Today, often, Jesus is still despised and abhorred. The intelligentsia of the West mock faith in Jesus; The Imams of the Arab world persecute faith in Jesus, the communists of the East try to stamp out faith in Jesus. He is despised and abhorred. But - v.7 - "**This is what the LORD says... "Kings will see you and rise up, princes will see and bow down, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."**

This verse must have been an incredible comfort to Jesus, as he faced his accusers who ridiculed him and spat on him.

And it has been fulfilled already - many kings and rulers have bowed to the LORD Jesus, and submitted their lives to him, including our own Monarch, her majesty Queen Elizabeth.

And this verse will be completely fulfilled, because one day every knee will bow to Jesus, the King of Kings - because he is the the Servant: the chosen one, the Messiah, the Saviour and Lord for the whole world.

Imagine a Roman Emperor, marching back into Rome, victorious after a campaign. There were two ways people would bow down to him: many Roman Citizens would bow in honour and awe and respect and even love. The captives however would bow in defeat and subjugation.

And on the day of the Lord, when all bow before him, those who have turned to Jesus in their lifetime, in repentance and faith, needing and wanting his forgiveness and life - they will bow in honour, respect, love, awe, wonder and praise.

But there will be many who never did receive Jesus as Lord and Saviour, and who bow in fear of his right judgement.

Is Jesus exalted before the people of the world?

He is, and he will be.

So: What are you going to do about it?

Don't be afraid to stand up for Jesus - lovingly, carefully, respectfully, and non-violently; but boldly, confidently and faithfully - sharing with people the greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and our God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit - all the while making sure that we exalt ourselves; by humbling ourselves, letting him take the rightful place as Lord of our lives, and treating him all the time with respect and awe and wonder, and love.

Praise Jesus to the world today, so that people will bow the knee today, while he can be their Saviour.

Do you know?

Do you realise what you've got in Jesus?

Most of the time it looks like we don't?

But Don't panic - this is why God gives us his word, this is why God speaks to us through it:

Does Jesus display God's glory to the world? v. 3 **"You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendour."**

Will we make God's glory known in Jesus?

Does Jesus bring salvation to the world? v.6 **"I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may be my salvation to the ends of the earth."**

Have you received Jesus' salvation?

Is Jesus exalted in the world? v.7 **"Kings will see you and rise up, princes will see and bow down, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."**

Will we be unafraid, exalting him to the world, and in our lives?

Do you realise what you've got in Jesus?

What are you going to do about it?