

Keynotes from Sam Gordon's Sermon on 28/6/2020

"Song of the Servant 2"

(Please read these notes whilst listening to the sermon audio file.)

Mini Series "Trusting God in the darkness:

Isaiah 49:1-13 Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name. ² He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away. ³ And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified." ⁴ But I said, "I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the LORD, and my recompense with my God." ⁵ And now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him—for I am honoured in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength—⁶ he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." ⁷ Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers: "Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you." ⁸ Thus says the LORD: "In a time of favour I have answered you; in a day of salvation I have helped you; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages, ⁹ saying to the prisoners, 'Come out', to those who are in darkness, 'Appear.' They shall feed along the ways; on all bare heights shall be their pasture; ¹⁰ they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them. ¹¹ And I will make all my mountains a road, and my highways shall be raised up. ¹² Behold, these shall come from afar, and behold, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Syene." ¹³ Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted.

All of the four Servant Songs have one string to their bow, and that is Jesus. What a treasure we have in darkness when we have Jesus who is the light of life! In the songs, we see the Servant revealed as one who is both Son and Sovereign – a Servant

worth singing about and we are reminded again that the hope of the world is a Servant! The theme of this second Servant song can be summed up as the **calling of the servant** and it shines the spotlight on how the mission of God's Servant, the Messiah, extends to the Gentile nations. The song divides into three main sections. Firstly the Servant himself speaks about himself (vv1-6) then God speaks to the servant (vv7-12). Finally v13 highlights the response from Isaiah to **the good news brought by Jesus – that sinners can be forgiven and life can become excitingly new**. What can we learn about Jesus in this song?

1. The Servant's identity – vv1-3

These words give us a glimpse into the mind of Jesus and how, as the Servant, he saw his role in the unfolding drama of God's purpose and plan. Here he looks at his past in relation to eternity, and comes to terms with the 30 years that he was out of the limelight.

- a) Jesus is conscious of his relationship with God before time began:
 - God had a special mission for him and he called him to that role
 - His was a gospel centred ministry, a rescue mission to redeem lost people to himself.
- b) The unseen hand of God was on him even in the darkness of his mother's womb (v5)
 - Joseph and Mary had no say in the choice of his name – an angel told them what it was to be
 - He was to be called Jesus – because he would save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21).
- c) The Servant would fulfil a prophetic role, engaging in a gospel-preaching ministry (v2)
 - His mouth is like a sharp sword – a sword wins victories close at hand
 - A polished arrow is renowned for its accuracy – it hits distant targets
 - Hidden by God, as he lived an ordinary life in Nazareth, in God's perfect timing the Servant would be made known to the nations.

Jesus is a man with a message – his words hit hard and they hit home. We are reminded of this in many places in the New Testament, as we link scripture with scripture.

- **Ephesians 6:17** the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God
- **Hebrews 4:12** For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword

d) The Servant is addressed as Israel in **v3**. Israel had really messed things up, as we can see looking back to earlier chapters.

- The Servant is given the name Israel because he is all that Israel ought to be – the only one who can live up to God's expectations
- Only he can bring to pass all that is spoken of in v5 – restoring us to sweet fellowship with Israel's God

He is the Servant who is the Son, the Sovereign and also the Saviour, through whom God will be glorified.

2. The Servant's despondency - v4

Jesus is called by God but then a dark cloud seems to come over him, though no explanation is given here. **Isaiah 42:4** hints of trouble ahead – 'He will not grow faint or be discouraged'. **Ch 49:7** speaks of 'one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation'. He came to his own and his own received him not. However, in **v4b** he says 'yet surely my right is with the LORD, and my recompense with my God.' The Servant knows God is on his case and the outcome lies with him. There are lessons for us here:

- You may be doing exactly what God calls you to do but still feel overwhelmed with the seeming futility of it all. Nonetheless it is for God to decide whether we are failures or not.
- It is Jesus who is speaking here and we are reminded that he is human and is tested in many ways yet through it all, he's still conscious of his relationship with God. He speaks of him as **My God**.

- Even on the cross, despite a sense of utter abandonment, Jesus cried out to **My God** (John 19:30)

When life and ministry seem pointless, look above to a higher throne and remember that the Father knows best. There is a treasure in the darkness.

3. The Servant's task vv5-6

His task is to restore God's people to himself. This is a spiritual restoration to bring them back into fellowship with the God of their fathers.

- The Servant will have a global ministry, moving beyond an exclusive mission to the Jewish people to reach all the peoples in all the earth.
- He will be a light for the nations which are living and dying in darkness
- His salvation will reach to the ends of the earth because the people need to be rescued and redeemed.
- He won't only bring their salvation. **He is their salvation.** Simeon says "for my eyes have seen your salvation ³¹that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." **Luke 2:30-32**
- The promise can be traced back to Genesis, when God promised Abraham that in him all families of the earth would be blessed. **Genesis 26:4** I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring, all the nations of the earth shall be blessed,

That promise is for us too. We have entered into the blessing - all because God so loved the world.

4. The Servant's assurance – vv7-12

Vv7 - 8 remind us of the success of both the Gentile mission and the mission to Israel. It's all about the restoration of the hopeless. Then he tells us that the Jewish and Gentile people whom God will redeem will find:

- They will not be in need nor will any danger harm them vv9-10

- No barrier will hinder these people coming to God from all over the world vv11-12. We get a hint of what we read later in **Rev 7:9** **After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.**

How do we know God will do this?

v7 starts **Thus says the LORD**. It will happen because God says it will and in our lifetime it is coming to pass. It doesn't depend on us. Our God is able and he can and will do it - cause for the rousing acclamation of praise from heaven and earth that comes in **v13** Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted.

So the song ends as it began, with all eyes gazing on the Lord – the good God of the covenant who tenderly reaches out to his people with comfort and compassion. As we receive this compassion and comfort, it reminds us that God does what he does because he is who he is. We can trust him as we walk in the light but also in the times of darkness, when we discover that we have the treasure of Jesus walking with us each step of the way.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus
 Look full in his wonderful face
 And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
 In the light of his glory and grace.