

Keynotes from Sam Gordon's am Sermon on 21/6/2020

Mini-Series "Trusting God in the Darkness" Part 4

"Song of the Servant" (1)

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

Isaiah 42: 1-9 Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. ² He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street;

³ a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.

⁴ He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law. ⁵ Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: ⁶ "I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people,

a light for the nations, ⁷ to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. ⁸ I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.

⁹ Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them."

Writing 600 years before Jesus came, Isaiah, the greatest evangelical prophet of the Old Testament era, saw a vision of a higher throne and of the King in resplendent glory. He brings to us the four servant songs of Jehovah, showing us the supreme servant (Ch42), the sovereign servant (Ch 49), the submissive servant (Ch 50) and the suffering servant (Chs 52-53). Isaiah looks into the future through the eye of faith, with a real sense that God is going to do something big. He is looking forward to a day when this will come to pass, as indeed it did. What didn't happen at the first advent will be fulfilled at the second advent when our Lord returns in power and glory. On the road to Emmaus, when Jesus was sharing with the two men 'things concerning himself', their hearts were set on fire.

Looking at what these songs tell us about Jesus, may we too catch such a vision of Jesus as Servant and Sovereign that a flame will ignite on the altar of our hearts.

When we see the Lord Jesus Christ as he really is and when we have him where he belongs, everything else falls into place.

This first servant song gives us at least four things to note about Jesus:

1. **His relationship to God – v1** Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.

In the previous chapters, we were asked to **behold the idolatry and the idolaters** whose delusion leads to emptiness and the ultimate futility of life without God. In contrast, **Ch 42 v1** starts **Behold my servant**, and reminds us of the fulness of abundant life when we have a vibrant relationship with God.

In a crumbling world of crazy idols, the Servant is sufficient. He's the one we all need.

a) The Servant is described as **my servant**.

- Using the word **my (servant)** underlines the depth of their relationship and speaks of security and identity. He is both the Father's Son and the Father's servant. As his servant, he is at the Father's disposal. He is there to do whatever the Father wants and go wherever the Father wishes, doing the Father's work as he carries out the Father's will.

How can he do that? v1 Behold my servant, **whom I uphold** - He is **upheld** by God the Father so

- He will be strengthened by God at all times. Whatever the circumstances, good or bad, the Father will keep him going day after day.
- The Father will hold on tight to him. He has sovereign rights over his servant and is determined to keep his servant for himself. It is an unbreakable bond.

b) The Servant is described as **my chosen**. He is:

- hand picked and appointed by God, who equips him with everything he needs to do his bidding.

c) The Servant is spoken of as one **in whom my soul delights**.

- God finds pleasure in him. This points to the affirmation Jesus received at his baptism. **Matt 3:17** and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." Such a reassurance for Jesus at the start of his ministry.

The Father wants us to delight in Jesus too, with hearts that have been redeemed by his blood.

d) The Father says of the Servant: **I will put my Spirit on him:**

- The Servant of the Lord will be endued with divine power, equipped by the Spirit of the Lord
- **Isaiah 11v2** foretells this: And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
- Jesus confirmed this, as Luke tells us, quoting from **Isaiah 61:1ff** The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me

All that Jesus did, he did in the power of the Spirit, which makes him

unbeatable.

e) We discover what he is going to do – **he will bring forth justice to the nations.**

With God's Spirit resting on him, the servant's ministry will be successful. Justice as fairness and equality is not what is spoken of here.

- The Servant is going to bear witness to the truth of God's word. It is God's word and God's truth that this world desperately needs.
- Jesus will not just bear witness to it, but will embody it. **John 1v14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us
- His task is to bring God's truth to all the peoples of the earth, to every nation, Jew and Gentile alike – for which we can all thank God, since it includes us.

Only then can men and women be in a right relationship with God and one another, so that justice will be seen in all its beauty and glory. The God of justice

has a ministry of restoration – we have all been defaced and disfigured by sin, but God specialises in getting us back into **his** shape.

He comes not only to put things right out there but to put things right in our hearts.

2. His relationship to others - Isaiah 42v2-3 He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; ³ a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice

Jesus has all power vested in him and is coming to put things right. Yet he doesn't go about this as the world would expect but:

- is renowned for meekness and modesty, alongside his majesty.
- is marked by tenderness, mercy and compassion, though he will do all that he needs to do
- cares for the weakest, those who feel like a bruised reed. He doesn't break us.

Jesus, as the servant of Jehovah, is attracted to weakness. He loves those who are battered and bruised.

The tender touch of Jesus is seen when he restores us to a place of usefulness.

3. His relationship to his own trials - Isaiah 42vv3-4 ³ a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.⁴ He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; he will faithfully bring forth justice.

- Jesus, as the Servant, is a real man dealing with real issues and facing real challenges, yet he connects with us and understands us in our weakness.
- He is marked by strength and power, stamina and courage. He is there to help us and pull us through.
- He demonstrates amazing grace and the outcome is that his mission is accomplished.

As the servant he is not only sufficient but successful.

4. His relationship to his mission – Isaiah 42:5-9 ⁵ Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: ⁶ “I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, ⁷ to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. ⁸ I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols. ⁹ Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.”

Isaiah reminds us who God is:

- transcendent, the great creator, the giver and sustainer of life.
- He is Yahweh, who revealed himself to Israel in the past, and desires that his Servant reach out to the whole world. It is an epic mission but nothing is too hard for him.
- God will be with the Servant. He will take hold of his hand, making him a channel of his blessing for needy souls around the world, including us!

Jesus is the light of the world – he saves, redeems, delivers, rescues and emancipates.

Isaiah finishes off this Servant song with a reminder that God is the incomparable Lord who protects the honour of his peerless name, and guards the glory of his splendour and character. In a world of tiny gods, He is God and is in control of the future, as he was of the past. He is sovereign, a good God of gracious providence.

He is the unchanging God, though now he's in the business of doing new things (v9).

These new things are all wrapped up in the work of the Servant (you can add to this list!):

- The new covenant in his blood
- The new birth that the Holy Spirit gives us
- The new creation of which we become a part

- The new song we have begun to sing
- At the end of life's journey, we go into the presence of the one who makes all things new

To finish, we need to go back to verse 1 – Behold my servant.

It is all about Jesus – may we never lose sight of Jesus