

Group Notes 13 February 2011

Servant Song #2 – the servant's royal status

Welcome - Ice Breaker

It's St Valentine's day this week! What's the most romantic thing you have ever done?

Word - Sermon Summary: Isaiah 42:1-9

There are four passages in Isaiah known as Servant Songs because they all feature a mysterious figure, a servant of the Lord, predicted to come at an unspecified future time. Some Jewish interpretations associate this servant with the future of the Jewish nation but Christians reckon that Isaiah is referring to Jesus. During February we are looking at the four servant songs in sequence as follows:

1. Isaiah 42:1-9 – the servant's mission
2. **Isaiah 49:1-7 – the servant's royal status (this week)**
3. Isaiah 50:4-11 – the servant's obedience
4. Isaiah 52:13 53:12 – the suffering servant

As with last week, there are more similarities between the servant and Jesus:

- v. 1: the servant was known to God and called by God before he was born. Compare John 1:1, where the Word (Jesus) is with God from before Creation.
- v. 2: the servant is specially prepared by God for His purposes: he is finely honed, like a sharpened sword or polished arrow. The picture is of God the Great Warrior, planning to go to war on behalf of His people to set them free from sin and death and preparing Jesus as His choice weapon for this task. The Word of God is compared to a sword in the New Testament, see Hebrews 4:12.
- v.2: yet the servant is also secret, hidden in God's hand, concealed in God's quiver. Jesus was a mystery until made known through the Gospel, see Ephesians 3:2-9, and remains a mystery until the Holy Spirit unveils people's minds, see 2 Corinthians 3:13-18.
- v.3 makes an explicit link between the servant and the people of Israel. Does this rule out a reference to Jesus as the servant? One school of thought is that Jesus as the Jewish Messiah represents the fulfilment of all God's purposes for Israel and therefore is in Himself the true Israel.
- v.4: the servant experiences disappointment with God, or at least in the outworking of God's purposes. For the Old Testament believers this might be reflected in the experiences of never really making it into the league of leading nations, but instead suffering the ignominy of defeat, exile and even enslavement. In referring this verse to Jesus, we might think of Jesus' experience of rejection, suffering and even the abandonment He went through on the Cross. All the servant can do is keep on trusting that one day God's better purposes will prevail and resurrection will come.
- v.6: The servant's ministry is going to be expanded to the whole world. A major failing in Jewish history has been that they have assumed that God's blessing on them as His chosen was exclusive – in spite of God's promise to Abraham that through him **all** the nations of the world would be blessed, see Genesis 12:3. However if we assume that this verse refers to Jesus - and it is explicitly quoted in Luke 2:32 - we find that He currently has over 2 billion followers of one kind or another in every country in the world today. Don't be discouraged by the local situation in the UK!
- v.7: The servant after being despised and abhorred will be acknowledged by kings and rulers all over the earth. Christians would take this as a picture of Jesus, His earthly suffering complete, now ascended to the throne of God in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords. In the fulfilment of God's purposes Jesus will be acknowledged by all the rulers of the earth, see Philippians 2:6-11.

Word 2 - Discussion Questions:-

- Verse 2 presents the servant as a mysterious, secret figure.
 - How important is mystery to you?
 - Some people find mystery repellent and want everything to be easy to explain, others feel that this is too shallow and like it when things are more profound. Which one are you?
 - Are God's ways mysterious because He likes to keep us guessing, like a writer of detective stories? Or is it because He is too vast and deep for our minds to follow?
 - How does the secrecy of the servant square with the commands Jesus gave us to tell everyone about him?
- One of the hardest things for Christians to talk about is a feeling of disappointment with God or with the outworking of His purposes in our lives. It feels as though we are letting the side down, expressing a lack of faith or even blaspheming. Yet in verse 4 the servant feels able to express these feelings.
 - How would we cope if we had to face such feelings in our own lives?
 - Would it be better to talk about them? or keep them quiet?
 - How can the example of the suffering of Jesus and the apparent futility of His death, or the struggles of God's Old Testament people, help us through these times?
 - The servant deals with them by saying he will just go on trusting God somehow. Of course in Jesus' case that trust was vindicated by the resurrection. Is this enough for us?
- Verses 6 and 1 tell the Jews off for seeing God's call and choice as exclusive matters just for them. God should not be limited by our inward looking minds in this way! But do Christians do exactly the same thing? Are we guilty of seeing Him as just the God of the Christians and not as Lord of the whole of creation and all its peoples?
 - All over the world people are turning to Christ and there are more than two billion people in every nation claiming to follow Jesus in one way or another. In China, for example, there are thought to be at least one hundred million Christians and the number is growing every day. Why do you think the Christian scene is so much more vibrant in many other countries than it is here? What can we learn from our brothers and sisters overseas?
 - Since Jesus is for the whole world, how can we reach out to people of other faiths?

Worship Ideas

Print out the Servant King (words below) – it could be a theme song for this series, couldn't it? Give everyone a verse or a couple of lines each and read it round. Let each person give thanks for what their lines say about Jesus in His servanthood and His majesty.

Works / Witness

As we have been thinking about the servant's worldwide mission today, pray for our overseas missionaries:

- Paul and Lesley Evans – Paul is currently working in very difficult conditions in Zimbabwe.
- Alison Giblett, working with addicted people in the Ukraine using methods pioneered by Jackie Pullinger.
- Christ for All in Andhra Pradesh and their amazing witness in word and deed to some of the poorest people in India.
- The Barnabas Fund working with the Christian Community wherever it is persecuted.

From heaven you came, helpless babe,
entered our world, your glory veiled.

Not to be served, but to serve
and give your life that we might live.

This is our God, the Servant King,
He calls us now to follow Him.
To bring our lives as a fragrant offering
Of worship to the Servant King.

There in the garden of tears
My heavy load He chose to bear.
His heart with sorrow was torn,
"Yet not my will, but yours," He said.

Come see His hands and His feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice.
Hands that flung stars into space
to cruel nails surrendered.

So let us learn how to serve,
and in our lives enthrone Him.
Each other's needs to prefer,
for it is Christ we're serving.