

Group Notes 6 February 2011

Servant Song #1 - Mission

Welcome - Ice Breaker

Once upon a time most rich people kept servants. If you had a servant, what task would you most want them for?

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 – and there are some very remarkable pointers! This is all the more powerful because Isaiah was writing some 600 years before the birth of Christ.

During February we will look at the four servant songs in sequence as follows:

- **Isaiah 42:1-9 – the servant's mission**
- Isaiah 49:1-7 – the servant's royal status
- Isaiah 50:4-11 – the servant's obedience
- Isaiah 52:13 53:12 – the suffering servant

It is hoped that in doing this we will see more of the beauty and wonder of Jesus' character as reflected hundreds of years beforehand in Isaiah's amazing prophecies.

Similarities between the servant and Jesus:

- v. 1: the servant is commissioned by God Himself. God marks His choice by the delight He takes in him and by giving His Spirit. Compare the commissioning of Jesus at His baptism in Matthew 3:16-17, where the Father says He is pleased with Jesus and the Spirit rests on him as a dove.
- v. 1 & 6: the servant's mission is to "the nations" and "the Gentiles" as well as to the Jews. Jesus came to redeem the whole world, Jew and Gentile alike.
- v.2: Jesus was renowned for his humility. Like the servant here he kept silent rather than argue with those who arrested and falsely charged him.
- v.3: "a bruised reed" is useless as a material because it has lost its rigidity and "a smouldering wick" is one that takes some care and trouble to get to burn properly. These are metaphors for weak and fallible humans (Jesus wasn't a thatcher or a candle maker!) who aren't a lot of use. The servant has the right to come to judge such people – he is a righteous and just servant – but in fact Jesus' mission was to spend time with lepers, prostitutes, tax collectors and sinners.
- v.4: the servant, like Jesus, will bring a new law to "the islands" – distant parts of the earth. Jesus' new covenant is now known all over the planet.
- v.6: unlike a usual covenant relationship, which takes the form of a treaty with terms and conditions spelled out, the servant himself *is* the covenant. In the same way it is only through Jesus that our relationship with God is restored.
- V.7: Jesus literally opened blind eyes. He also released people from oppression. He promised that he would in Luke 4:18.
- V.9: God proclaims that a new thing is going to come into being with the arrival of his servant. Jesus is the one who makes everything new – see 2 Corinthians 5:17

Word 2 - Discussion Questions:-

- How valuable do members of the group find the Old Testament generally? Has it built up their faith? Or has it puzzled them or even disturbed them at times? How can we help each other with this?
- Jesus himself believed that the Old Testament Scriptures speak about him – see for example John 5:39 or Luke 24:25-27. How struck are the group by the similarities between the servant and Jesus? Are they just coincidence? Or a bit far-fetched? Could these servant songs be some of the Scriptures that Jesus meant when he said the Bible speaks about himself?
- Jesus is more than a servant: he is also God's Son. Which sentences or phrases remind you more of a son and which ones remind you more of a servant?
- Reflect on v.3 where it says Jesus will not break a bruised reed or snuff out a smouldering wick. Does this really refer to the way he deals with fallible human beings? If so it involves compromise, muddle, and, as the song says, "smoke gets in your eyes..." What's in it for God? Why should he deal with us so gently when he could just scrap everything and start again?
- Can you pick out one aspect of Jesus' character that has stood out more clearly for you as a result of this Old Testament passage?

Worship Ideas

Read the passage through aloud, slowly and thoughtfully. Ask each group member to pick out a particular phrase or sentence that strikes them. Ask them to share their insight with the group. Give thanks for the beauty of the character of Jesus.

Works / Witness

Can anyone help? Please publicise this to your members:

A 38 year old male Theology Student is urgently seeking accommodation in the central Walsall area/area around St Matthew's church. He would need a room within the next two weeks for a few months at least - it's not entirely sure for how long that time period would be. At weekends his 5 year old son may come to visit and possibly stay; he has a blow up bed and bedding for his son so nothing extra would need to be provided.

The student would need to be able to access the Internet, have somewhere to do his assignment work - a desk in the room if possible - and be able to do laundry, as well as prepare his own meals.

If you feel that you can help, please do let me know as soon as possible.