

## Isaiah 49:1-13 The Restoring Servant

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Pilgrim's Progress is a story about the journey of a character called Christian, a man who is seeking his salvation on a pilgrimage to Heaven. Along the way, Christian encounters many obstacles that test his faith as well as many characters. Told as a dream, this seventeenth century classic uses Bible verses mixed with allegorical characters to tell its message.

Christian sets out on a journey to save his soul. He leaves behind his friends and family in the City of Destruction and follows the advice of his spiritual guide, Evangelist, in order to reach the Celestial City.

The entire tale is a journey between Christian's hometown, the City of Destruction and the path to the Celestial City. In between them, however there are valleys, mountains and temptations that can mar the easy path to Christian's ultimate destination. His first obstacle is the Slough of Despair.

He also encounters Difficulty Hill. He meets two characters, Formalist and Hypocrisy who try to convince him that shortcuts are not only time-savers, but fun as well.

After fighting a monster named Apollyon and winning, he comes to the Valley of the Shadow of Death, where he is full of sheer terror. He meets Faithful there, and they become friends and help each other out during the trip along the Valley. They arrive at Vanity Fair where they are tempted with a myriad of things, all immoral and material.

Like Christian in Pilgrim's Progress, Israel are on a journey and they have faced obstacles and temptations. They have fallen along the way as they have turned away from God to idols.

As followers of Jesus we are on a journey with obstacles instead of looking to God and his servant Jesus we look to everything else. I know when something challenging comes up in my life I turn to things that give me a bit of fun or distraction and comfort rather than Jesus.

In Isaiah 49 we are told about the servant of God who we should trust in alone and make known in the world.

Isaiah 49 is the Second of the Servant Songs. We looked at the 1<sup>st</sup> in Isaiah 42. Israel needed more than release from Babylon. They needed a saviour greater than Cyrus.

### 1. The Servant Israel needed

#### Read: 49:1

Instead of being spoken about the servant is speaking this time.

Listen to me he says. This is what we heard God say before for example in 48:1. This servant is the voice of God on earth and he demands people listen to him. Speaks as God with the authority.

He explains his intimate connection with God in verse 1.

He is a special person. He is like a prophet with an intimate connection with God.

He has been given a role. He is appointed.

With ultrasound we can see inside the womb before a baby is and see heartbeat of a healthy baby. You can get the photo and even the video. But we get more than that for this child. His purpose for his life is known and determined.

What is that role?

He is a prophet. He speaks words that pierce and penetrate.

v.2

He won't do his work with an army but speaking God's Word. He is the secret weapon of God to be brought out at the right time.

This is Jesus.

See Revelation 1:16

*“In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.”*

This week I had the privilege of speaking Year 11 students at a school for their Christian education class. I had to speak about how we can trust the Bible. One of the things I said was that the Bible like no other book is a dangerous book.

He is now called Israel. It cannot be the nation of Israel as we are told in verse 5 that Israel will gather Israel. We have told before this that the nation of Israel have not lived up to their name. They have not achieved what they should have achieved. This servant is the substitute Israel who does live up to the name. This servant embodies all that the people of Israel should have been.

Verse 4 shows how even this servant struggles from a human point of view with God’s purposes.

This is Jesus. When Jesus lived on earth he was despised and rejected even by his own family. Jesus entrusted himself to the one who bring about his purposes.

It is no wonder that this servant as the true Israel will show God to the world.

v.3

This leads us to...

## **2. The Salvation the world needs**

### **Read: 6**

The servant has a double role. He not only will bring back Israel but will bring salvation to the Gentiles. To the other nations. This servant is too great to only be the saviour of Israel. He is to be a light – the light to the world. Through the servant God will bring about his universal purpose of salvation for the world.

How will this happen?

v.7

Things will be turned upside down. Kings will get down from their thrones and bow down to this servant.

As we’ll see in a few weeks that is only possible through this servant dying.

Mark 10:45

*“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

It won’t just be for the servant that things are turned around. For what he does will bring about a radical change for many.

## **3. The Restoring Servant**

### **Read: 49:8-12**

People with no land will be go home. The hungry and thirsty will find pasture and water. Displaced people will come home along easy paths. And not just for Israel but for people everywhere.

He will be a covenant. In the Old Testament God makes covenants with people that make it possible for people to know how they have a relationship with him. So here it is not some written contract but a person who is a servant. He is how you can have a relationship with God. He defines the how and what of a relationship with God. It is through Jesus this is made possible. He will restore the ruins that sin has made of us.

He leads us in to new way of life, caring for us moment by moment, providing us fully, overcoming the obstacles, getting us all the way home to his eternal presence.

Marriage is a covenant relationship. Two parties make promises to each other and two parties agree to keep these promises forming a life long covenant relationship. God makes a covenant relationship with except there is only one party who makes the promises – God. The only thing we have to offer is our sin. We can only offer that we will betray God, disobey God, turn to other things and disappoint God. He says I give my Son Jesus in death to deal with your side of the relationship. His covenant is now Jesus.

The tile of our series in Isaiah 40-55 is ‘Trust in God alone. So can we trust in God alone?

Yes he shows us we can in giving us Jesus. Relationship with God is found in Jesus.

God wants you know that you have everything you need for life in Jesus. At every moment of life whatever comes your way Jesus is all you need. This is the whole point of Isaiah. It is the whole point of the Bible. Look to JESUS and no other.

What can he get you through?

So when you look down the road of life and see the obstacles of life you can know you can trust in Jesus to get you through. Life is like John Bunyan described in his book Pilgrims Progress. There are the known obstacles and there will be unknown obstacles.

What are some of the known obstacles?

Sickness - Old age - broken relationships – death – change - temptation – sin. When we face them we are to trust in Jesus alone as the only one who can get us through.

What about the unknown obstacles?

We all have expectations of life but not all will be met.

Aren't the unknown obstacles the same as the known except maybe the surprising timing is what is different.

Sickness – death - failed business – unemployment - no wife - no husband - no children.

John Piper says:- *"If you don't spend some time preparing for what may not be, you will not prepare for anything in this life."*

Our trust will be shown in our lives having the same purpose of God.

To make the name and fame of Jesus known in the world.

Jesus in Luke 19:10 says he came to seek and save the lost.

Acts 14:37 Paul and Barnabas used Isaiah 49 to explain why they were preaching to the Gentiles. They saw Isaiah 49 not just as an explanation of the role of Jesus but a command to them. Jesus role of being a light to the nations continues on through his people.

He confirmed this when he said that his followers are 'light of the world.'" Matthew 5:14 You are the light of the world.

William Temple said: *"The church is the only organization organized primarily for the benefit of its non-members."*

We act like it exists for us and our preferences that's why there is always in fighting in churches.

Barry Webb says:

*"Healing begins when we stop focusing on ourselves and our arguments with God and start looking outward to the world that he loves and that needs to know about him."*

Some times as you continue the work of the servant you will feel like the servant in v.4

This is why we are having the SMBC Mission week that we are calling – OPEN HOUSE. It is a way of getting us to focus on those not here yet. Pray for them. Befriend them. Love them. Invite them.

Jesus being for the nations is why we are planning to start a new church or service some time this year. It is a biblical pattern to reach people. It is the most effective way of reaching people.

We are maturing disciples but if we are to continue to grow as a church we need to start focusing more on making disciples.

The answer to these questions highlight how much we need to do this.

When was the last time you led someone to Jesus?

How many of our visitors in the past year have been people who don't know Jesus?

When was the last time we baptized someone from outside the church family?

When we start reaching out to grow it is going to mean making changes. Both to our lifestyles and to church. The question will be will we love our preferences over the lost. Will we love our traditions more than the lost?

**Read v.8**

Will we trust in Jesus alone and show this by living to make known his name and fame in the world?