

The Servant of the Lord - Isaiah 42

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(Leaders, please use these questions as a guide for discussion. Please don't feel like you must consider every question!)

Warm-Up

1. Have you ever found yourself in a situation without realising how serious it was, or how you had got there? What happened?

4. The problem - read Isaiah 42:18–25

2. What stands out to you about the way God describes his own people?
3. Although this passage is about God's covenant people Israel, Mark pointed out the parallel with the way most Australians are living today – that is – blind to the realities of how they've pushed God aside and the consequences of living that way. How should that shape the way we think of them?
4. V22 describes a people with no one to rescue them and no one to plead for them. What does that picture stir in you?

3. The Lord cries out - read Isaiah 42:10–17

5. Read verses 13–14. Why had God held his peace and why is he going to act so decisively?
6. Why does this announcement call for a "new song" from the ends of the earth (vv 10–12)? What does it tell us about the scale of what God is doing?

2. New things I declare - read Isaiah 42:5–9

7. Why does the Lord begin verse 5 by reminding the exiles that he is the Creator? What difference would that make to people sitting in Babylon? What difference does it make to us in our time?
8. Verses 6–7 speak of "a light for the nations" who will "open the eyes that are blind". Read Isaiah 9:2 and John 1:9. Discuss how Jesus is the marvellous fulfilment of this prophecy.

1. Behold my servant - read Isaiah 42:1–4

9. Read Matthew 3:16–17 and Luke 9:35 and continue the discussion around the identity of the servant of Isaiah 42 and how we can be confident.
10. What does it mean that he brings justice to the nations (not only to the exiles)?
11. Verse 4 says he will not grow faint "till he has established justice in the earth". Read Isaiah 9:6-7. How does knowing how the story ends shape the way we live and pray when the world as it is today distresses us?
12. Isaiah says, "Behold my servant." Which of these things about him (upheld, chosen, delighted in, given the Spirit, gentle, unfailing) do you most need to look at this week?

PRAY: *Heavenly Father, thank you for Jesus, your servant, in whom you delight, who is gentle with bruised reeds and flickering wicks, and who will not fail until justice is established in all the earth. Open our eyes, keep us looking at him, and give us hearts that long for the day he finishes what he began. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God

Date: **22 November 2026**
Service/s: St John's Wishart
Series: Isaiah Highlights - Part 2
Title: The servant of the Lord
Passage: Isaiah 42

****

INTRODUCTION

Last week Michael finished his message on Isaiah 40 with the words "Behold your God". /

Have you been beholding this God this week? /

This God who stepped into our world and revealed his glory?

Behold your God!!

Now in Isaiah 42, God says to us, "Behold my **servant**!" ///

You'll remember that Jerusalem had been invaded and many of her people carried off to Babylon, where they've now been for decades.

Like people in exile today, they'd made the best of a bad situation.

Jeremiah had even told them to settle in and seek the good of the city.

So when comfort is announced to these exiles, there's a fair chance the answer is "Thanks, but we're quite **comfortable** here."

…or, from the ones who've **given up**, "How ***could*** we **ever** escape **Babylon**?"….they believe their way is **hidden** from the Lord (40:27). //

So what might **convince** these people that help is **coming**?

Michael showed you last week…

The prophet proclaims in ch 40

…the God of **comfort** – comfort my people…

the God of **certainty** – whose word stands forever

the God of **self-sufficiency** who needs no **counsellor** or **advisor**

the God who is over the **nations** - who just **blows** and their leaders **crumble**

the God of **strength** – so people may **run** and not be **weary** – **walk** and not be faint!! //

Now in chapter 41 (which we are **not** looking at today) God goes **on** reassuring his people in exile in Babylon.

Let me show you two stunning sections if you'll turn with me:

Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God

Vv8-9:

"But you, Israel, my servant,
Jacob, whom I have chosen,
the offspring of Abraham, my friend;
you whom I took from the ends of the earth,
and called from its farthest corners,
saying to you, 'You are my servant,
I have chosen you and not cast you off.'"

Do you see the Lord's love for Israel?

You're my **servant**.

I **chose** you.

I **called** you.

You may be in **Babylon**, but I **have not cast you off**.

I haven't **finished** with you **yet**!

And then verse v10:

*"Fear not, for I am **with** you;*
*be not **dismayed**, for I am your **God**;*
*I will **strengthen** you, I will **help** you,*
*I will **uphold** you with my **righteous right hand**."*

In a world of pain and confusion, a word of assurance from the God of the nations: I am **WITH** you. And I am **FOR** you. ////

but now we turn to chapter 42…

….look with me at the opening words

"Behold, my servant."

Now – we'll need to explore **who** this servant is, as Israel itself was only just now in ch 41 addressed as God's **servant**… / so **more** of that in a **minute**… but /

… what's being promised in ch 42 is **far** more than release from **Babylon** and a **return** to **Jerusalem**.

It's **justice** for the **<u>nations</u>**, (that is – for **the entire world**) its **light** for the **nations**, it's **redemption** for the **world**! ///

So here is where we're heading this morning.

1. **Behold my servant vv 1-4**
2. **New things I declare vv 5-9**
3. **The Lord cries out vv 10-17**
4. **The problem vvv18-25**

Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God

Now – I'm going to do something a little **unusual**…

I'm going to start with point 4 – vv18-25

4. THE PROBLEM

If I came up with an **incredible** cure for **cancer** – that both **prevented** cancer in the first place BUT ALSO **cured** it, where it had already occurred…

….**BUT** // if you'd never **had** cancer or even heard of cancer and had no understanding of the seriousness of cancer…

…would you be **excited**? //

Would you be **willing** or **keen** to take the **medicine**?

I suggest **not**…! //

For only when someone grasps the **seriousness** of a **problem** will they in turn grasp for the **solution** with **both hands**!

Vv18-25 help us **understand** the **problem** the servant will address…

Have a look with me at v18 –

Hear, you deaf,
and look, you blind, that you may see!
19 *Who is blind but my servant,*
or deaf as my messenger whom I send?
Who is blind as my dedicated one,[n]
or blind as the servant of the Lord?

Israel had been set apart as God's people, as a messenger to tell **all** the nations how **glorious** God is… but **they themselves** are now **deaf** and **blind**!

This is why the exile was a **mystery** to them – why – as you saw last week – that they considered their **plight** was **hidden** from **God**.

They're **clueless** as to their **sin** and **rebellion** and the **judgement** God has **brought** upon them – despite the warnings and proclamations of the prophets along the way…

V22 – have a look

The Lord was pleased, for his righteousness' sake,
to magnify his law and make it glorious.
22 ***BUT //*** *this is a people* ***plundered*** *and* ***looted****;*
they are all of them // trapped in ***holes***
and ***hidden*** *in* ***prisons****;*
they have become ***plunder*** *with* ***none*** *to* ***rescue****,*
spoil */ with none to say, "****Restore****!"*

The Lord had revealed himself to them by his magnificent and glorious word, but because they turned from his word – turned from **him**, they've been plundered and looted – and there's no one even to cry out 'HELP' because they're so deaf and blind!!

V24 ***Who*** *gave up Jacob to the looter,*
and Israel to the plunderers?
Was it not the Lord, against whom we have sinned,
in whose ways they would not walk,
and whose law they would not obey?

It is the Lord **himself** who has given **Israel** over to **Babylon**!.... //

Not only has Israel **abandoned** God's will, but they are **clueless** to that they have done so, and **clueless** as to the consequences! ////

…I remember coming off Logan motorway… trying to get across to the exit which would take me to Michael and Rachel's… watching the GPS… but unfamiliar with the area – at night and before cataract surgery – I went down the exclusive **busway** lane instead….

…I had **no clue** how I'd done that…

no **clue** as to the consequences and

no **clue as to** how I was going to get **out** of **there**!!

And friends, as an aside… // this is how many **Australians** without God live…

no **idea** that they've turned their back on God…

in the words of Romans 1 – they **suppress** the truth about him that is available in **creation**…

they have **no idea** that they've been given over **by** God to the **consequences** of their **rebellion**…

and **no** clue how to change their circumstances or **escape** the **mess**!!

However – of course // this is **not** about **Australians**… but about the **covenant people** of **God**… // …but I see parallels!

So where does this leave Israel then, except to come under the **heat** of God's **anger** – v25 ///

So he poured on him the heat of his anger
and the might of battle;
it set him on fire all round, but he (Israel) did not understand;
it burned him up, but he did not take it to heart.

Well – there's the problem…

God's people – deaf, blind, plundered, in exile, facing the heat of God's wrath… and yet… and yet… God loves them, he remains committed to them – and he's coming for them in Babylon!!

And the Lord himself is going to make himself known…

3. THE LORD CRIES OUT

Have a look with me at V13

The Lord goes out like a mighty man,
like a man of war he stirs up his zeal;
he cries out, he shouts aloud,
*he shows himself **mighty** against his foes. //*
14 *For a long time I have held my peace;*
I have kept still and restrained myself;
*now I will cry out **like a woman in labour**;*
*I will **gasp** and **pant**.*

Have you **heard** a woman in labour / **scream**!!??

To the **deaf**, the Lord will make himself **heard**

To the **blind** – he **shows himself**

To what end?

V16 - *And I will lead the blind*
in a way that they do not know,
in paths that they have not known
I will guide them.
I will turn the darkness before them into light,
the rough places into level ground.
These are the things I do,
and I do not forsake them.

The Lord is going to act to bring his people from **Babylon** to **Jerusalem**…

No wonder the call comes in v10

Sing to the Lord a new song,
his praise from the end of the earth,

And v12

Let them give glory to the Lord,
and declare his praise in the coastlands.

…for the Lord is **going** to declare new things (and so to my next point):

2. New things I declare vv5-9

V9 *Behold, the former things have come to pass,*
*and **new** things I now declare;*
before they spring forth
*I **tell** you of them."*

Now the nature of this new thing will unfold over the remaining **weeks** in this **series**… so – stay tuned…

But **here's** what we can say from **ch 42**

The Lord establishes **again** his credentials… v5 – **HE** is the one who created all things… who gave his breath – his spirit to those who walk on the earth…

And then he says v6

Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God

"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.

This is **magnificent**.

He will take his **servant** (who we'll meet in a moment) by the **hand**…

And this **servant** will be a **light** for the **nations**

He will open **blind** eyes –

… he will **rescue** people from **darkness**….

Are you reminded of

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. John 1:9

and

Isaiah 9 T*he people who walked in darkness*
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shined.

Something wonderfully **new** is being **proclaimed**… //

AND // it's not just for God's **people** but the **entire world**…! //

Now that just leaves us with one important question….

How? //

How is the Lord going to do all this?

How will he rescue his blind and deaf exiles and do something new? //

How will he bring something **new** out of the **mess**? //

And that brings me now to my first point

1. Behold my servant (vv1-4)

V1 – Behold my servant…

And the first question is – **<u>who</u>** is this?

It can't be **<u>Israel</u>** the **servant**… ***<u>that</u>*** servant is **flawed** – remember – blind and deaf and oblivious to their plight and what led them there… /

No – **THIS servant** is someone **<u>else</u>**… //

Let's read **on** a little, to work out who he is

*Behold my **servant**, whom I **uphold**,*
*my **chosen**, in whom my soul **delights**;*
*I have put my **Spirit** upon **him**;*

Upheld by **God**

Chosen by **God**

Delighted in by **God**

God's own **Spirit placed** upon **him**

Sound **familiar**?

Yes – from Matt 3 - *And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him,[c] and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; **17** and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son,[d] with whom I am well pleased."*

Spirit of **God** descending on him….

Beloved – **well pleased** and **delighted in** by **God**…

Then in Luke 9 at the transfiguration God declares – v35 - *And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my **Son**, my **Chosen** One;[a] listen to him!"*

And in Matthew ch 12 – we won't turn there now - the evangelist quotes the words of Isaiah 42 directly and relates them to Jesus //

YES - this **servant** is **Jesus**… **chosen** by God, **delighted in** by God, **indwelt** by God's own **Spirit**…!! //

And **how** will this servant be the answer to Israel's predicament?

V1 – he will bring forth **justice**… though not just to Israel – to the **nations – to the world.**

V3 at the end – he will **faithfully** bring forth **justice**

V 4 – he will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has **established <u>justice</u>** in the earth!

Do you **get** the **picture**?

The servant is pictured here as having a **WAY** bigger role than leading the **exiles** back to **Jerusalem**…

This servant will right **all** the **wrongs** of the **world**… not just for a **moment** – but for **ALL time**!!

That's the task for which he's been chosen

He will be **upheld** by **God** in that **task**

He will be **guided** and **strengthened** by the **Spirit** for that task

And **nothing** will get in his way! //

Readers of the prophecy of Isaiah will be thinking – we've heard something like this before…

Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God

And indeed you have – **Isaiah 9** – no doubt read here in a carol service in the coming weeks –

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon[d] his shoulder,
and his name shall be called[e]
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
7 Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and for evermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

///////

And **look** at him… He's a **servant** not a **tyrant**.

he doesn't come with **trumpet** or **fanfare** - drawing **attention** to himself

Rather - he is **gentle** – not crying **aloud** – **gentle** even with a bruised **reed** or burning **wick**…

A bruised reed is no use to anyone. You can't lean on it, you can't write with it, you can't play it. Most of us would snap it off and throw it in the bin. He doesn't.

A flickering wick is a lamp that's nearly out. The smoke is worse than the light. You'd pinch it and open a window. He doesn't.

He is strong enough to establish **justice** in the whole earth, and **gentle** enough not to snuff out one wick.

(Some of you are here this morning are feeling little **bruised** or **broken**.

There's been some sadness – some grief.

Perhaps you feel like a flickering wick - still lit, but only just.

The servant – the Lord Jesus – is **gentle** with you – Matt 11:28-29 *Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest… I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.)*

Jesus' **gentleness** is not **weakness**.

> "He will not grow **faint** or be **discouraged**."
>
> The one who is **tender** with the **wick**,
> ….is the one who will not **flicker** out **himself**!!

Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God

Behold my **servant**!! says the Lord

The salvation of the world – **justice** - is not by means of a **plan** but a **person**.

A **servant** who you'll discover in a couple of weeks, **dies** for his **people** – who **bore** our **griefs** and **carried** our **sorrows**… whose **wounds** have paid our **ransom**…

Behold my **servant** – **look** at him. //

Israel – **blind, deaf and in trouble**.

But the Lord **himself** cries out that something entirely **NEW** is needed and **he** will **bring** it…

He will **bring it** in the form of his **servant**…

Whom he **chose**

In **whom** he **delights**

And upon whom he set his **Spirit**

…. And by **sacrificial**, **quiet**, **gentle service**… by **death** and **resurrection**… will he bring final **reversal** and **justice** and **peace** /// to the **mess** which is our **world**.

Behold my servant //

Does ***your*** **soul** / **also** / delight in him?