

"Servant of Servants" Isaiah 42, 49

Ever feel like something's just not quite right with this world? Tsunamis, wars, slavery, drought, poverty, recession... how will it ever be fixed? God has an answer; the only answer. He will send His Chosen Servant to make all things right, so that all the earth may praise Him.

- **Do you ever get the feeling something's just not right with this world?**
 - o Biblically accurate
 - o End of Gen 1 – all "very good"
 - o Doesn't last long – Gen 3 – sin enters, pain & destruction follow
 - Sin grows – Gen 4 – premeditated murder – humanity didn't ease into sin!
 - o Genesis, just first book, reads like R-rated movie! Murder, war, slavery, immorality of every kind, dysfunctional families, infertility, starvation...
 - o What was "very good" becomes "very broken" very quickly.
- **Fortunately, Genesis isn't all bad news!**
 - o God begins the process of restoration – He'll fix what we broke
- **He'll do that through His servants**
 - o "servant" *ebed* – 800x in OT!
 - o "servant / slave" – negative ring in our ears – ugly history of racial slavery – slavery b/w humans tends towards abuse & evil
 - o But not true of slavery of a person to God
 - Always an honor to be a servant / bond-slave of YHWH – exalted position in Scripture – only the best are called!
 - He is always a good Master – the best – gives His servants eternally significant tasks – no more honorable calling
 - o **The "largest" servant mentioned in the OT = Israel**
 - **Lev 25:55** – emancipated to serve Him
 - **Exod 19:5-6** – reason for their existence – serve God as a kingdom of priests
 - What does a priest do? Represent God to people & people to God – draw people close to Him
 - Whole nation chosen to be priests to the entire world
 - I used to read the OT & feel like it had nothing to say to me – all about the Jews... feels like God is opposite of anti-Semitic
 - Couldn't have been more wrong! Whole reason He chose them is because He loves the whole world
 - o Jews are simply the means by which God is restoring the world
 - o They are His channel of grace to the world.
 - o **Unfortunately, Israel failed.**
 - Exod 19 again – v5a – that's exactly what they did not do!
 - Disqualified themselves as priests

- Sad story of OT – as broken as every other nation
- **So God raises up individual Israelites to be servants to the servant**
 - Moses, Joshua, Caleb, David, Isaiah
 - Despite all their efforts, Israel & world continue in rebellion
- **So God promised to raise up a Servant unlike any other – Ideal Servant**
 - Turn to Isa 49
 - Isaiah has much to say about Ideal Servant – 4 songs:
 - ch 42,49,50,52-53.
 - look at first 2 today; 52-53 next week
 - **Read 49:1-3** – sounds like nation of Israel
 - **But... read 49:5** – distinct from Israel – will be the one to restore Israel
 - called “Israel” because He will be the Ideal Israelite – what the Jews were supposed to be
 - In Isaiah’s day – this ideal Servant was cloaked in mystery
 - Not named; don’t know who he’ll be or when he’ll come
 - But we do – this is Jesus!
 - NT makes that very clear – multiple quotes from servant songs applied to Jesus
- **Isaiah doesn’t know Jesus’ name, but He does know what he will do and why it will matter**
 - Wants us to understand the mission that Jesus came to earth to fulfill
 - Subject of first 2 servants songs...

The Servant’s Mission

- **Make all things right... (read 42:1-4)**
 - “**justice**” – repeated 3x in these 4 vv
 - = *mishpat* (Heb root used 57x in Isa)
 - can mean “just laws” or “just judgments” in a court of law
 - or like here, something broader – justice in the sense of all things being made “right”
 - The Servant will restore the world so that all functions “rightly” – as God intended
 - will make all people **right with God**
 - read 5:7 – Israel’s problem – no *mishpat*, not right with God
 - But God promises to fix that – 49:5 – Israel will be restored
 - How? Through a New Covenant – 49:8
 - Mosaic – brought only curse – no ability and desire to obey
 - New Covenant
 - brings complete forgiveness of past sins
 - brings desire & ability to obey so you no longer sin
 - He will be this new covenant – source of forgiveness & transformation
 - New Covenant will bring new Exodus.
 - Servant Songs full of Exodus language
 - New Exodus out of darkness of sin & rebellion
 - And not just for Israel
 - 49:6 – too small to only restore Israel – God has bigger plans for Him – be a light to the world – a light that brings salvation for all
 - Result: 42:10-12 – all the world will glorify God

- Mishpat begins w/ becoming right with God – but doesn't end there...
- will make all people **right with one another**
 - **Isa 2:4** –
 - no violence anywhere on earth
 - no need for weapons – turn them into farm implements
 - no need for soldiers – no one will ever again learn art of war
 - Grateful for our soldiers – very grateful that their jobs are temporary!
 - to understand how significant this promise is, consider this...
 - A group of academics and historians has compiled this startling information: Since 3600 B.C., the world has known only 292 years of peace! During this period there have been 14,351 wars large and small, in which 3.64 billion people have been killed. Since 650 B.C., there have also been 1,656 arms races, only 16 of which have not ended in war. The remainder ended in the economic collapse of the countries involved.
 - War is as certain as death and taxes in the world we live in.
 - But that's about to change – when the Servant comes.
 - **Not only an end to war... Isa 16:4b-5**
 - No more extortion, destruction, oppression – no one taken advantage of – will forget meaning of words like “abuse”
 - US State Dep't 2005 report on **human trafficking**...
 - modern day domestic or sexual slavery -- 600,000 to 800,000 people are trafficked across int'l borders as domestic or sexual slaves every year, most of them women or children. Of those, somewhere b/w 14,000 and 17,000 slaves are brought into the US every year.
 - slavery alive & well in our world – but not once the servant comes
- will make all people **right with creation**
 - Adam's sin – brought curse not just on mankind, but on rest of creation
 - **Gen 3:17-18**
 - Creation is broken – meant to yield only good – instead we get tsunamis, earthquakes, droughts, famine, floods.
 - But all that will change when the Servant comes... **49:9-10**
 - Will remove the curse
 - Creation will yield nothing but blessing to humanity
 - Now: 1 billion go hungry everyday
 - Then: earth so fertile, even sides of roads and once barren mountain peaks will be overflowing with crops!
 - Now: 884 mill lack access to safe water supplies (1 in 8)
 - Then: # will fall to 0 – people won't even thirst again
- The Servant will make all things “right” once again when He brings perfect justice to earth – right with God, one another, creation.
- **Now we live after the coming of the Servant – Jesus came 2000 yrs ago...**
- **...and yet most of this promise is still future for us.**
 - What of these 3 did Jesus accomplish 2000 years ago? Just the first.

- Death & resurrection made it possible for humans to be right with God
 - Great news because that's the most important of the 3
- However, we are still waiting on the other two
 - war, slavery, drought, starvation – as prevalent as ever
 - But He's coming back to complete His mission!
 - That's why we should be longing & praying for His return
 - Early Christian cry "Maranatha" – Come, O Lord!
 - That's the glorious hope we have! No matter how bad this world gets, it will be completely fixed when Christ returns.
- The Servant will make all things right! How will He do that?...
- **...through astounding gentleness...**
 - turn to ch 42
 - "Gentleness" will be the Servant's "MO" – read 42:2-3
 - v2 – three-fold emphasis on the quiet, unaggressive, unthreatening ministry of the Servant.
 - will not promote Himself – will not shout others down – will come in humility
 - "a bruised reed" – stalk of a reed plant you find in wetlands – broken
 - similar to the "dimly burning wick" – almost burnt out
 - Isaiah's point:
 - How do most world leaders extend their influence?
 - through power & might
 - especially true in Isaiah's day – build your empire on the ashes of your neighbors
 - express power through conquest
 - But not for the Servant – express power through gentleness
 - will not answer oppression & arrogance w/ more of same
 - So humble & gentle that even the weakest of humanity – broken reeds & dimly burning wicks – will be lifted up
 - power expressed thru healing & restoration
 - ill: rhyming Bible we read to kids...
 - a king like no other! Gentle, kind, loving
 - But that's not how world leaders usually act
 - Result – The Servant's gentleness would be mistaken by the world as weakness
 - The world's response: 49:7a – they ridicule and reject Him
 - including the leaders of His own people – big part of reason Israel rejected Jesus when He came
 - looking for military messiah – not interested in humility
 - But God will have the final word – God would vindicate His Servant
 - 49:7b – stand in awe, bow in submission
 - God will demonstrate thru the Servant that true power is found in humility & gentleness

That's how the Servant will operate – thru His example, all the world will be made right...

- That's what's coming, some day soon – all will be made right so that all may glorify God
- That's why we long for the return of Jesus.
- But what do we do in the meantime?...

Application:

We are called to be servants like Him – follow in His footsteps – join His task

Jesus' mission is to make all things right. Is that what you are doing with your life?

- **Are you helping people become right with God?**
 - o Are you sharing the good news of the gospel?
 - o Easy opportunity – less than 2 weeks away – Easter Eggstravaganza. Who can you invite that doesn't yet know Jesus?
- **Are you helping people become right with one another?**
 - o Are you an example to the world of peace, grace, humility, selflessness?
 - o Do you sacrifice your rights and desires to serve and love others – not just family
 - o At it's best, the church – a force for peace & justice: William Willberforce, George Mueller, Corri Ten Boom
 - o Are we people of peace and charity to the world?
- **Are you helping people become right with creation?**
 - o \$, time, talents to help those suffering from the curse on this world? Food, water, natural disaster relief?
 - o Called to push back against the curse wherever we can
- Clarify:
 - o we can't end violence and we can't fix creation – only Jesus can
 - o And most important of 3 by far is #1 – right with God
 - bottle of water can keep a person alive for a day, but still going to hell!
 - o So give... but give to those who share the gospel while digging a well...
- Most importantly, focus on those you can help right here, in our community
- God has called you to join in Jesus' mission. Will you heed the call?