

Life Group Notes

Promised One

Isaiah 49:1-7

To begin

- Have you ever been forgotten? What was it like?
- Have you ever made a promise, only to forget it or be unable to keep it? What were the consequences?

Introductory Comments

Our reading forms part of the Servant Songs in Isaiah. They were so-called by an Old Testament scholar called Bernard Duhm, who identified four passages in Isaiah 40-55 that seemed to be referring to a Servant to come. The Songs are found as follows (with our sermon titles in brackets):

- Isaiah 42:1-9 (Chosen One)
- Isaiah 49:1-7 (Promised One)
- Isaiah 50:4-9 (Obedient One)
- Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (Sacrificial One)

Who is the Servant? It could be that Isaiah is talking about himself. If so, he makes some very bold claims in a way that no other Old Testament prophet does. It could be that the Servant refers to Israel. Sometimes, in scripture, Israel is the servant. In today's passage, that would Israel being sent to Israel (vv5-6) which doesn't make much sense. The belief of most scholars is that the Servant is referring to someone who is yet to come. From our New Testament perspective, surely it is Jesus who fulfils the prophecies of the Servant songs?

Questions for discussion

1. Do you have an experience to share of being away from home when you didn't want to be? How did it feel? How do you think the exiles felt at being in Babylon, with little or no prospect of returning to Jerusalem?
2. What would it have felt like to these exiles to hear the words about the Servant brought by Isaiah?
3. What are the things in the reading that seem to describe Jesus the Messiah?
4. In v4, the Servant seems despondent. Do you think Jesus ever felt despondent? (See Luke 9:41; Mark 8:21; Mark 14:27). What things in our world make you feel despondent?
5. Why might people feel that God has forgotten them? How does Isaiah 49:15 (and the following ones) speak to them or to you?
6. To a people that felt forgotten, God promises a Servant who will bring them back to Him (v5). Then he says he will extend the promise to those who were not his chosen people – to the Gentiles (v6). How does Jesus fulfil the promise?

7. Share some promises of Scripture that are special to you. Are there promises yet to be fulfilled? Read 2 Peter 3:9. How (and for whom) does this verse give you hope? Maybe you'd like to pray in your group for these people?

Closing Thoughts

There is no doubt in my mind that the Servant in the four Servant Songs is looking towards none other than Jesus Christ Himself! He is the Promised One. In 2 Corinthians 1:20 we are reminded, 'For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him, the 'Amen' is spoken to us by the glory of God.' Where God has made promises yet to be fulfilled, we can be sure that one day they will be. When Christ was crucified, people must have wondered if all the promises made would come to pass. With his resurrection, Christ answered with a resounding 'Yes'!

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