

Isaiah
Week 2/
Jeremiah

the Servant of the Lord

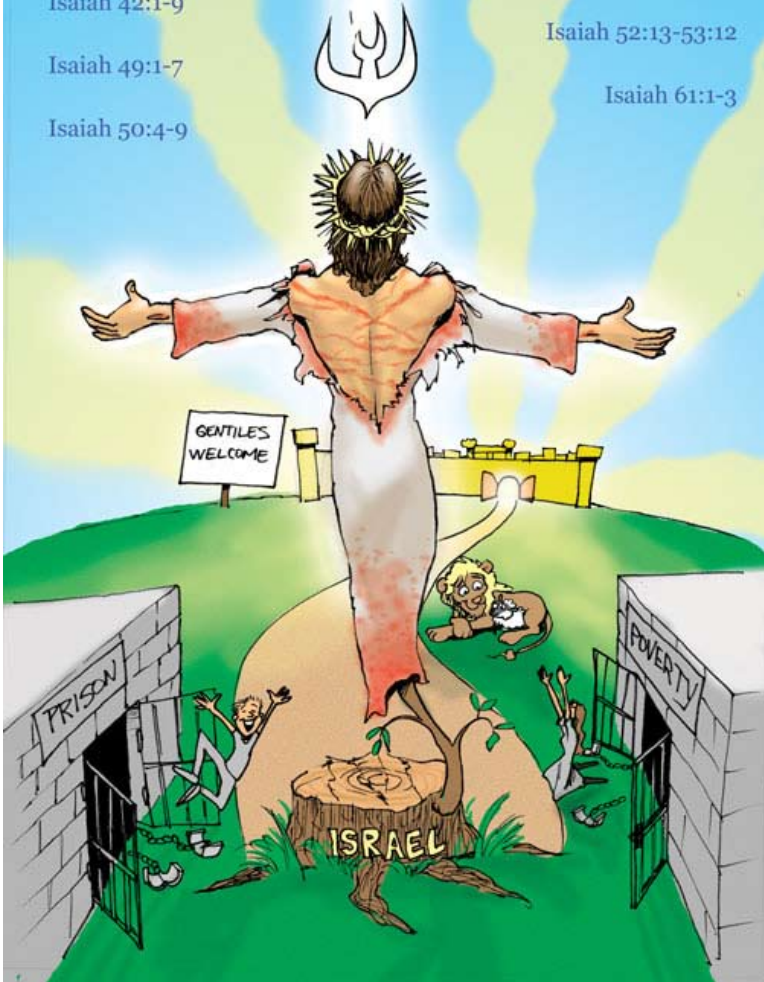
Isaiah 42:1-9

Isaiah 49:1-7

Isaiah 50:4-9

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Isaiah 61:1-3



Monday: Isaiah 50-57

Tuesday: Isaiah 58-66

Wednesday: Jeremiah 1-3

Thursday: Jeremiah 4-7

Friday: Jeremiah 8-12

The daily reading this week moves us through the end of Isaiah and into the preaching of Jeremiah. For consistency in the teaching, the devotional will focus only on the second part of Isaiah, finishing off the two series begun last week. We will plunge into Jeremiah's tearful journey next week.

“Pictures of the Kingdom”

Last week we left Isaiah at the death of King Hezekiah. Hezekiah was the only king who really listened to Isaiah's preaching and did anything about it. Because of Hezekiah's humility and courage, he tore down the idols in the city and reconnected the people to the right worship of God. As a result of his reforms, he saved the city from imminent destruction at the hands of the Assyrians and prolonged their life. Unfortunately, Hezekiah's reforms merely prolonged the inevitable. After Hezekiah's death, his son Manasseh ascended to the throne of Judah and plunged the people into a deeper pit of idolatry, witchcraft, and wretchedness than the nation had ever seen. The damage this young, brash king did to the nation was irreparable and sealed their fate for the coming destruction at the hands of the Babylonians. That destruction would not come for a few generations, so while Manasseh sat on the throne Isaiah was cast into obscurity, his teachings were openly mocked, and, tradition tells us, he was ultimately sawn in half by the order of Manasseh. It is during these dark years that Isaiah turns his focus

beyond the heartbreaking destruction of the city and into the future hope of the coming kingdom. He believed, and God revealed to him, that God would save His people and restore them to a beautiful Kingdom where He would be exalted, worship would be restored in the Temple, peace would reign, and Jerusalem would be a bright shining beacon of hope for the entire world.

In chapters 40-66 Isaiah gives us “pictures” or “snapshots” of what this glorious future Kingdom would look like. Each day of the devotional this week will look at one of these “pictures.” Of course, we can’t look at them all due to the size of the book and the amount of material, but please be encouraged by the pictures we do examine.

Monday: A Picture of God

Isaiah 40:6-31

As you read through these verses, make a list of God's attributes. How do you feel after describing God this way?

The mood you are in today may impact your reaction to this description of God. If you are feeling good, you may be filled with confidence and feel great that you are on God's side because He is so big and is in control. If you are feeling down you may be overwhelmed by the scope of God and feel small and insignificant.

If you feel like the latter, then read vv. 29-31 again. What is the promise made in these verses?

Do you feel weak or tired today? Spend a moment and try to pinpoint where you feel most weak or vulnerable. Now imagine yourself giving that portion of your life to God. On your own you probably aren't strong enough. But, with the eternal power of God holding you up, you can soar!

Spend some time committing to God that you will draw on His strength and have a great day.

Tuesday: A Picture of the Suffering Servant

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

In the second half of his book, Isaiah is describing what will happen after God's judgement on Judah is finished and He begins to restore His people. Isaiah paints a picture of the coming King that will establish His kingdom to rule over the whole world. When you think about a king setting up a kingdom for world domination, what kind of characteristics do you think would need to be present in that king?

Now read Isaiah 52:13-53:12 and list the character qualities and actions this "servant" takes.

This servant of the Lord is a shock to our expectations. What kind of a king would allow himself to be led like a lamb to the slaughter and die for the sins of his people? We know a King like that. Isaiah was predicting the coming of the Messiah, the anointed one of God, who would be the Servant of God and the King of the people. Jesus is that Messiah.

Spend some time thanking God for sending Jesus to fulfill this prophecy of Isaiah's and to pay for our sins.

Wednesday: A Picture of the People

Isaiah 56:1-8

What instructions does the Lord give to the people in order to prepare themselves for His return?

In vv. 4-8, what attitude does the Lord have toward the Gentiles, or those who are not from the nation of Israel?

Throughout Israel's history they struggled with this area. When God made His promise to Abraham, He said that He would bless all nations through Abraham. God intent was from the beginning to bring everyone to Himself. Israel was supposed to be the light shining on the hill so that all people would see the glory of God and be drawn to Him. Instead, the people used the Law to keep people out and took on an elitist attitude. God was not pleased by this.

How is the Temple described in v. 7. Read Matthew 21:12-15. How does Jesus describe the Temple, and why is he so angry?

The people in Jesus day were no different than those in Isaiah's day. They had turned what was supposed to be the bright, shining symbol of God's love and grace to the world and turned it into a market place to make a quick dime. How many times do we do this? How many times do we use our "religion" to keep people out and to capitalize on it for our own behalf.

Ask God to reveal any ways in which you may be keeping "strangers and foreigners" outside of your heart for the wrong reasons.

Thursday: A Picture of God's Home

Isaiah 57:15; 66:1-2

According to these verses, where does God live?

Food for thought:

In these verses we are reminded of two very important truths.

First, we see the power and majesty of God. We talked about that on Monday. God is almighty. He is not some god that we made up, He is the creator and sustainer of all things. In that we can take confidence.

Secondly, and really the point of today's lesson, is the fact that God is not just the transcendent, almighty God. He is also the tender, compassionate, very near and intimate lover of our souls. Here is the important part. God does not live intimately in everyone's souls, only in those with a humble and contrite spirit, and who tremble at His word.

Let's take a moment and look at the definitions of the Hebrew words that are translated "humble" and "contrite" in the NIV.

Humble –

In 57:15: the Hebrew word *shiphel* which means "to be low in station."

In 66:2: the Hebrew word *awnee* which means "afflicted or poor".

Contrite –

In 57:15: this is the Hebrew word *dacah* which means "crushed."

In 66:2: it is the Hebrew word *nakah* which means smitten or beaten. Literally, the phrase is "a beaten down spirit."

We live in an age where pop-psychology is focused on helping us see all the good in ourselves; helping us to feel good. This emphasis has seeped into the church and put pressure on pastors and teachers to only focus on the grace of God; creating a "kinder, gentler" God from that image of God which may have been portrayed in days gone by.

While this emphasis is good and very important, there is a danger in leaning too heavily toward that end of the continuum of understanding God's nature and our relationship with Him. With too soft a picture of God we can be tempted to inflate the picture of ourselves and begin to treat God with contempt, or at best with flippant familiarity.

Notice the progression of thought in these verses. First, God is almighty and transcendent, above anything we could ever aspire to be. Second, God is intimately relational with humans if, and only if, one important thing happens. The human must be

crushed, poor, beaten down, and of low position. Yikes! As terrible as this may sound, when we stop to think about it, it is the only thing that makes sense. Not until we are completely broken can God truly enter into our hearts and begin to rebuild us into the image He wants us to be. Only then can He be the potter, shaping the clay for useful application. It is our pride, our sense of self-reliance, that inhibits the presence of God to fill us and transform us.

The challenge before us today is to ask, “what part of my life still needs to be crushed?” “where am I still holding back and not completely giving over to God in absolute surrender?” Money, work, parenting, relationships? Is He calling you to ministry and you are afraid of financial security? Is He asking you to love an unlovely person and you are afraid of being hurt? Give in, get crushed, let God build it.

Friday: A Picture of the Kingdom

Isaiah 61:1-3; 65:17-25

We come now to the climax of Isaiah's message. After all the pain and destruction of God's punishment on Judah through the Babylonian exile, it is time to rebuild His people and establish the Kingdom that will bless the world.

Read 61:1-3. This is the final Servant Song where the coming Messiah begins the process of rebuilding the Kingdom.

Read 65:17-25. List the ways that the new Kingdom is described in these verses. How would you summarize and describe this new place?

Now read Luke 4:18-19. Keep in mind that the Jews to whom Jesus was speaking had been reading this passage for 500 years, awaiting the kingdom that Isaiah described. How do you think they reacted when Jesus interpreted this passage the way He did?

Now read Revelation 21:1-4. Do you see any similarities to Isaiah 65?

Here is the truth in which we, as Christians, can place our hope. Jesus is the Servant of God that Isaiah was predicting. Jesus suffered and died, taking on our sins and paying the penalty for them. Jesus also rose from the dead and stands as the mighty victorious Servant of God who has defeated our enemies. Now Jesus has established His eternal kingdom, right here in our hearts. We do not have to wait for a physical city to be built, we have access to the Kingdom of God, because of Jesus, and through the power of the Holy Spirit living in us.

Spend some time meditating on the fact that the power of God lives in you and that God has granted you the right to be a citizen of His Kingdom. How often do you tap into that Kingdom power to shine a light of hope to the dying world around you?

Jesus is King. Let's glorify Him today!