

Peace Through Restoration

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Date: 12 November 2017

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[0 : 00] The passage, Corey read from Isaiah chapter 49. And as he said in the evening worship, we're looking at the servant songs of Isaiah which really speak to us, tell us more about Jesus than even the New Testament does in some ways.

Gives us insight into the mind and the thinking of Jesus. And it's a good follow-on from this morning. We were speaking about having a servant heart and of course the ultimate servant is the Lord Jesus Christ and these are called the servant songs.

And I hope they allow it speak into your circumstances and into your heart this evening as we celebrate the Lord's Supper together also. Now just by way of introduction you remember and Corey will have put everything into its context already.

But this Isaiah was written in a time, or Isaiah wrote, prophesied in a time of chaos. Really times of political, social and spiritual turmoil.

And he mentioned, I know because I listened to it, he spoke about the kingdoms, Israel and Judah, having split apart by this stage.

[1 : 08] And the Northern Kingdom had already fallen to Assyria at great world power. Judah was much smaller and it was surrounded by threatening world powers.

And it was all political and also spiritually linked in together. And eventually their idolatry and their faithlessness brought them into exile themselves.

They lost the heritage of the promised land and they were exiled into Babylon after Isaiah's time. But right through Isaiah's time these people were unwilling to put their trust in God, the covenant God who had redeemed their forefathers from slavery in Egypt and brought them into relationship with him.

Sometimes they would rather go to just one of these other nations around about them to try and be strong, one of the nations like Egypt. Because everything seemed stacked against them.

But they had no sense of peace in anything they did. And it's interesting that the last verse of the previous chapter that we read, God speaking, and he says, there is no peace, says the Lord for the wicked.

[2 : 21] And then at the end of another section, at the end of chapter 57, exactly the same words. Nine, eight chapters later, there is no peace, says my God for the wicked.

So there's this lack of peace, okay? And we can relate sometimes to that whole concept of a lack of peace in our lives and sometimes a spiritual lack of peace.

So the theme of the whole book is to come back to the living God. That's the message, as a people they had turned away from God and so he's saying, coming back. Come back rather. Because turning away from God, and this is very relevant and up to date, turning away from God is Christians in our lives.

And for this people is never the answer. God's committed to them. God's incovenant with them. And he says, please start listening again. See the ugliness and the danger of wandering away from me as nations, as a nation, and as individuals.

And of course that message, maybe not so much for nations, but for individuals within nations. It's this great, ongoing, relevant challenge, both to us as Christians or if you're here this evening, and you're not a Christian.

[3 : 33] The only place of absolute peace for you, the only peace for us in our lives of internal peace and security, is to recognize that we're to come back to God, put Him first in our lives, worship and serve Him with His recognizing who He is.

And as Christians, we sit here tonight and we sit with a great weight on our shoulders that we are bought with a price. We are redeemed by the living God.

And He's always encouraging that the Lord's Supper is always a great time because it's an encouragement to come back, to return to the Lord for who He is. So I want to just for a moment this evening, briefly, if I can, to look at God's Redeemer, as He's highlighted in the passage we read.

We have here a prophecy of the servant of the Lord who's going to come and bring back the people, redeem them and be their Savior. Now, in a physical way, in a small way, that was in a short term way as it were, that was going to be a political Savior who was going to come and be the means by which they would come back to Jerusalem, back to the Promised Land.

King called Cyrus was going to bring them. But it's a much bigger picture here of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. And we have, as Corrie mentioned last week, unparalleled insight into Jesus Christ in these servant songs from Isaiah, written 100 of years before Jesus lived in it. It says here at the beginning that Jesus, the servant, is the one who is going to be called Israel. You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.

[5 : 18] So we have this name given to the Savior, to Jesus Christ. And we have this, pointing forward, by looking back, because do you know who Israel was?

Israel was a nation. But before Israel was a nation, Israel was a person. Jacob was renamed Israel. Do you remember when he was renamed Israel?

It was when he wrestled with God at Bethel. You see, you will no longer be called, Jacob, you will be called Israel because you have wrestled with God. You've contended with God. You've fought with God. And you've overcome this amazing passage. And so Israel, Jacob, had this great weight on his shoulder of carrying forward the promises made to Abraham, right through to him and his, those descendants after him.

And he knew about God's commitment to save a people, Israel. And yet Israel, the nation, had up to this point just stumbled and fallen and fell, had let down their God. They needed a redeemer. They needed a Savior. They couldn't live up to what God demanded. Jacob couldn't live up to what God demanded, even as the one who wrestled with God. There was to be a true representative, Jesus Christ, this servant who would be called Israel, who would be the representative of his people. And he would be, he was called from the womb, as you were told in verse 1, the body of my mother, he named my name, from the body of my mother, he named my name. Speaking of this redeemer who would come, who would be the representative, the incarnate Son of God, who would be the representative of his people, born of a woman, a servant, a slave, as Corrie mentioned last week. He, servants, a kind of gentle, nice phrase in a sense, but Jesus was this great servant, slave, in whom God would reveal his glory, who would display his splendor in a slave.

[7 : 27] In the lowest of the low, it's a unique designation of the servant king who would come, who would submit as a servant, as the sin-bearer, who would, as it were, wrestle with God, God, taking his own name Israel on behalf of his people, speaking reverently and carefully there, with a divine willingness that he would stand and be the one who would be our Savior and our Lord.

Because it goes on to speak of him as being the light of the world, the one who God has led to be in this amazing position of the ruler and the light of the world. He is so significant, I'm going to find it. Recognized in verses 4 to 7, it speaks of him, I have labored, oh no, I know, sorry I've got the wrong verse now.

Yeah, sorry, verse 6, at the end of verse 6, I was prepared this in a different Bible, different pages, and it always confuses me, I should learn, I should learn to use the same one, I will make you as a light to the nations at the end of verse 6, that the salvation may reach the end of the earth. You've got this great recognition of the servant of the Lord who's coming as the light of the world, who wrestled with a perfect despondency before the living God, and who recognized that he was in this great position of being the Satan. Verse 4, he says, I've labored in vain, I've spent my strength for nothing and vanity, surely my right is with the Lord, my reckoning, I trust in my God, and he was despised as we're spoken of, and abhorred.

And it reminds me of his cry for Jerusalem, when he cries for Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, I longed for you. His mother hen longed for to gather chicken under her wings, but you were not willing, and yet in that rejection, that almost despondency, he recognized anew that God had a purpose, and God was speaking to him, and said, you're the light of the world, you will not just restore Judah, but you will be for the whole of the world. It's not enough for you just to be the servant of my people, but you'll be justice and a Savior for the whole of the world, and you're honored and chosen, you're the covenant God, and there is this great covenant, new covenant, in

his blood that we recognize and we see and we know. So he's the light of the world, he's the one that offers restoration, speaks here about the end of desolation, that he'll set them free, and that they will know him and rejoice in him for who he is, and for what he's done. I know

I turned two pages, that's why I'm struggling so badly. In the time of favor, I answered you in the days that I helped you, I will keep you, and you'll be a covenant for my people to establish the land to apportion the desolate heritages. He's going to be this covenant for his people, which we will remember when we say this is a new covenant in my blood, that the covenant is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he offers this great recognition and hope and restoration.

[11:09] And verse 13, it tells us that he inspires praise, shout for joy, oh heavens and exalt the earth, break forth the mountains into singing, for the Lord is comforted as people, he will have compassion on his afflicted. So there's this great sense of rejoicing and the recognition of his comfort and his compassion. So it speaks in general terms of what he's coming to do, and how important and significant he is, and I'm sorry I completely lost my place there when I was looking at the wrong chapter, so I'm going to close that bit, okay, and I'm going to go on to just as we prepare for the Lord's Supper. We recognize that this speaks of Jesus Christ and it speaks of who he is and his relationship to the Father, and there's this ongoing conversation as it were between God the Father and God the Son in this passage, and they looked at very briefly. And we've got this great picture of a covenant, caring, servant, light redeemer who brings hope and who brings healing and who brings satisfaction, provision and guidance on our way home. I don't have time to go into more of that.

But before we sit down at the Lord's Supper, I want to ask what your response is to this picture and the picture that Cori gave last week of Jesus Christ as God's servant and the description it gives here which I haven't really described well in any sense whatsoever, but is it generally when we look at God's Word and we come to God's Word, do we find His Word encouraging? Do we find these pictures inspiring? Or do we find them irrelevant? Because I think it's interesting to see the response of God's own people that we have in this chapter. The response isn't great to this comfort, this prophecy of comfort that Isaiah brings to their member, they're beleaguered, they feel things are difficult, they need to return to the Lord, and Isaiah gives them this great picture of the God who will redeem and who will save them, and their response in verse 14 is, the Lord has forsaken me. Zion said, the Lord has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me.

It's underwhelming, isn't it? And is that the response we have to the living God at the core of your heart, at the core of your life? Do you look to God and say, well, I think the Lord is just abandoning me. I feel alone, I feel unspiritual, I feel it's much easier to trust things that I can see and feel in touch that are there tangibly. God is distant from me.

Despite these words that have been given in prophecy, He's just far away. And I think often our response can be the same as Zion, the people of Judah's response, the Lord has forsaken me and the Lord has forgotten me. So just before we celebrate the Lord's support together, can I just remind you of the promise He goes on to give in verses 15 to 18, both to them and also to us. There are tremendous pictures to think about when you're at the Lord's table. However difficult your circumstances may be tonight. However cold you may feel your heart is towards God.

We have here God, as it were, just simply trying to explain how much He cares, how much He loves. Have you ever been in that position with someone who doesn't believe you, but how much you love them?

[15:03] And you try and explain, you try and put into words just how much you love them, and you try and make it as clear and as passionate as possible. That's exactly what God is doing here.

He's seen the response that, well, they just say the Lord has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me. And so He responds to them with a couple of great pictures to say, no, that's not the case.

Please remember how much I care and how much I love you in your lives. And He uses a picture of a nursing mother, of a, can I say, a tattooed, engraved hand, and also the walls being before me. I'll just explain them very briefly. This great maternal picture we have of the living God. Can a mother, can a woman forget her nursing child that she should have no compassion on in verse 15, on the Son of the womb, even though she may forget, yet I will never forget you. So it's that maternal image again. It's used in the Bible quite often. The closest of all human links, really, isn't it? In many ways, that unique bond between the nursing mother and her child that she has birthed. She has birthed a life as flesh of my flesh. And there's this incredibly close and unique bond between mother and son and daughter. And God's using that picture. And He said, that's a human picture that you

understand. And you can see, and He said, but even if a mother would, and because that happens, a mother, sometimes mothers do forget their children and fathers forget their children, remarkably, how could that be the case? But they do. And He said, even though they may forget, yet never will I forget you. God says, you are born. And as a Christian, you're born twice from me.

I have born you twice. I've born you once in creation. And I've rebirthed you in salvation. I've paid, I've borne the cost, the birth pangs of salvation on the cross. I've paid the greatest of prices so that you can be born anew, born afresh, born again. And I've given you spiritual life.

So we have this great picture of the Redeemer, who for us all this evening has given us a new life, who's rebirthed us. And as such, he has created us, recreated us in his image. What a great promise. God says, look, I'll never forget you. I can't possibly forget you. Whatever you're going through, please don't feel. Whatever it might be that it's because God has forgotten you.

It may be that we don't understand, but He hasn't forgotten. He loves you. He loves you with this great, unique bond. What a great promise to take with us tonight and to meditate on at the table.

[18:10] But also, He goes on to further describe, He says, behold, I've engraved you on the palms of my hands. We are engraved, He says, I've engraved you. This is a tremendously strong picture of commitment, of God's commitment to us. The divine hands are the picture of His strength and of His activity. All that He does comes through His hands, as it were, the great source of His power and of His work. And He's therefore saying, all that I do, all that I sovereignly ordain to happen, I do so with you in mind, because you're right before me as I work. We're engraved in the palms of His hand this tremendously strong picture that He gives us hewn, as it were, into His hands, this image of His people always before Him. So even in the brokenness of the world in which we live, and maybe the brokenness of your experiences and of your life, He's saying, I will take them, because I'm sovereign and I'm king. And I will use them as you come under my shadow and in my wings, I will use them for good and for glory in your life,

His palms. As He works, His palms are facing Him. It's a picture, the word is engraved, strong picture, costly, deliberate, permanent. And I think it ought to make us think of His nail pierced hands as the symbol of His work on our behalf. Thomas says, I doubt you, I doubt you, I doubt you are the risen same. Come, Thomas, look at my nail pierced hands. There's this great physical emblem of the cost of our salvation, and it's always before Him. And we are always before Him. There's never a moment when His people are not the focus and the centre of His attention, which is a great comfort and a great reality. And He goes on, thirdly, to say, your walls were continually before me, He's speaking there of Jerusalem, the great city of God and the walls.

And these walls would soon be broken down. They'd be broken down and wrecked, because they'd abandon the city or they were taken captivity from the city, and the beautiful city of God would be in ruins. And yet, so it's kind of this picture that God has, that His beloved, His beloved Jerusalem, He doesn't see these broken down walls. He doesn't see what the destroyers have done, and what is laid waste. But He says, I see the walls, I see the finished picture. I see the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven as a bride prepared for a bridegroom, not the broken down walls of defeat and separation and destruction. He sees what we will be. He sees that finished city, that finished work, that beautiful prepared place that He has already made ready for us.

And often we're worried about our future, aren't we? Well, where will I be in five years' time? Where will I be in ten years' time? What will my Christian life be like? What will happen when I get old? What happens after I get old? What happens when I die? All these questions. And He's saying, Luke, a nursing mother, I'll never forget you. You're there. You're always there. And I see the finished picture. I see way beyond even the grave. I have all these things, great words of comfort and great words of protection. And they are intensely personal for us. And we recognize that this is a picture of the Redeemer who is our Redeemer and our Savior and our Lord. And we remember Him this evening, and we remember Him around the table. And I hope you'll just take time to think on these great pictures, which He wants to convince us of who He is and of His care and of His love and of His protection. And I do implore you in your Christian life, if you're far from Him, if you doubt Him, if you're drifting from Him, hear His great words and come back to this is the place of safety and security in His company, in His presence, under His Word, with His people prayerfully following Him as Lord and Savior. And may the Lord's upper be a time for you, if that's the case, of returning to Him.