

Introduction

- Following on from Luke, WDJJ...
 - and with half an eye on Christmas ahead...
 - taking Jesus from another angle, from the prophecies of Isaiah...
- For the heart of our identity as God's people lies in Jesus himself, and in our relationship with him
- The passages from Isaiah that we will be looking at over the coming weeks in the mornings provide a **pen portrait of Jesus**, drawn for us by one who never saw the culmination of what he wrote!
 - but by the inspiration of the Spirit at work in him, Isaiah has given us tremendous riches to deepen and widen our appreciation and understanding of Jesus and his work.
- *Where do servant songs fit in Isaiah?*
 - part of wider King (chps 1-39), Servant (40-55), Anointed Conqueror (56-66) breakdown of the whole book;
- In this first "servant song", Isaiah starts not so much by seeking to introduce us to the identity of the servant, but to his **task**.
 - Isaiah will get round to exploring the **who** more fully, but for now he is content to explore the "what will he do?"

Exposition

(1) "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight;

- NIV "here is", Hebrew "see": look at, fix attention on, observe, take in what he's like; and this a command from God!!
 - *"we've set the scene and now here is the man himself...."*
 - fanfare, throw back the curtain, reveal the one who will fulfil all the hints and hopes of an exiled people
- "My servant" - title, actually here says little about the person who bears it; more is said by the "my"! The Lord determines to keep his servant for himself!! (note wealth of personal pronouns in the introduction!)
 - **chosen**: the man for the job, able to fulfil what he needs to do;
 - but not merely able; for God **delights** in him - you might choose someone for a job without necessarily approving or even liking them! But this servant is a delight to his Master, one with him in purpose, character; in every way admirable and good!

I will put my Spirit on him

- "God's personal presence is upon him" is what this phrase would have conveyed to its original hearers.
 - we now have a much clearer, NT understanding of God as Father, Son, Spirit, but **need to be careful how we read that back into how the OT writers expressed themselves**.
 - however we understand God's Spirit coming on one who is already God, the **main point** is that the result is that **this servant has the Lord's personal presence**, and acts in the way the Lord would.

and he will bring justice to the nations.

- **Three justice statements** in this passage, each with its own emphasis:
 - here the emphasis is on the **universality** of the justice; for everyone, across the globe, across the board;
 - also note that this justice, this righting of things that are wrong, is **not something that the nations do or work towards themselves** - it is something that the servant brings to them; **his gift, not their effort**

(2) He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets.

- If in v.1 we met the **perfect servant of God**, in vs.2/3 we encounter **perfect service!**

- forecast for us here by Isaiah, exemplified in Jesus, and to be reproduced by all of us who serve the Lord.
- First characteristic of true service is that it doesn't draw attention to itself
 - a good waiter in a restaurant is the one you don't notice is there, and is never not there when you need them; doesn't draw attention to himself, but facilitates your meal!
 - exactly how Jesus acted in his earthly ministry, doing things as quietly, as unassumingly as possible.
- However our brash world may work, there is something deeply attractive about that kind of humble service.

(3) A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.

- To this servant, nothing is useless:
 - a bruised/crushed reed is useless as a support or for any other task; but he won't break it;
- And nothing is too far gone towards extinction:
 - even a smouldering wick he will save!
- Many of us feel useless, not worth saving, at times. Even when we are correct in our self-observation, the servant portrayed here will not break us, discard us, or snuff us out!

In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; (4) he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth.

- There is a connection in the Hebrew verbs used in this little chunk and in the earlier part of v.3:
 - this servant is subject to exactly the same pressures that crush and bruise others, yet he is not discouraged (crushed/bruised) - related verb
 - likewise we are caused to "burn low", in life or in faith; this servant does not falter (burn low) - again, related verb.
- Its not that the servant is immune from these pressures - far from it! - rather, he is not overcome by them, and is the one able, therefore, to help & support us through those bruising times, those times when life burns low

In his law the islands will put their hope."

- Final snippet of the servant song proper indicates Isaiah insight into the worlds proper response to the servant:
 - proper response is to stake their future on what he reveals (law) to them
- If you like: if this is the way the servant deals with you, what else can you do but give your all to him?

(5) This is what God the LORD says - he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it:

- Each of the servant songs in Isaiah is followed by a brief confirmatory comment, and vs.5-9 contain it for this first song.
 - look at this more briefly
- At the start of each stanza of the Hebrew (v.5,6,8) there is statement of self-identification:
 - a reminder of whose talking!
 - always important to remember whose talking to you! Quite different if its your boss or headmaster from your neighbour or a random acquaintance!
- Here it is God who has been speaking, it is God who has spoken all that we have overheard about the servant:
 - mighty creator, life giver and sustainer...
 - righteous one (v.6), holy, pure
 - unique God, (v.8) God's name speaks of his glory, that exclusive glory that is his alone, and for which he is rightly jealous
- This is not just anyone who has spoken to us about his servant!!
 - and now, as the Lord addresses his servant, he allows us to over-hear...

(6) "I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, (7) to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness."

- Two things are emphasised here, principally in the way the Lord deals with the servant, but then by extension for us:
 - first, **the Lord sustains, empowers, and strengthens his servant** - takes his hand, keeps him; he will do the same for us.
 - second, that **the servant's task is to bring people, Jew and Gentile alike, into direct (covenantal) relationship with God**: that's the force of "be a covenant", and the pictures of opened eyes & freed captives explore that - the healing of personal disabilities, the end of restrictions imposed by others, the transformation of circumstances - that's what such a relationship with God brings. While we aren't a covenant to others, we can point to the one who is, reflect his light

(8) "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols."

- *(talked about God's glory above)*

(9) **See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you."**

- In this part of Isaiah there is a growing contrast being drawn between an earthly conqueror, for example spoken of in 41:1-4, and the Lord's servant:
 - point of the contrast is largely to make clear the nature of the servant
 - the reference here to former things is to the way the conqueror does things; the new things are the ways of the servant
- In other words, God is saying through Isaiah that he has told people how the servant will act ahead of time so that the wonder and glory of his ways can be properly taken in!

Conclusion

- God's very own servant; **altogether good and able for his task; imbued with God's own presence; humble, self-effacing, gentle, up-building; faithful to his task, never overcome by the pressures we face; a light into darkness, one who frees captives...**
 - and all these descriptions validated from the **mouth of the Living God!!**
- (Psalm 98:1) **Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.**
- Let us fill our minds, fix our attention on Jesus:
 - how marvellous a Servant Saviour we have!
 - that justice bringer to a world seared by injustice
 - that gentleness to a world of broken, bruised souls
 - that faithfulness in a world of broken promises
 - that light in darkness, that freedom from captivity
- Spend some time in prayer; turn this picture of Jesus over in your mind; pick one aspect and apply its balm to your life or situation...