

Introduction

- **Jigsaw:** pieces build up slowly to form the overall picture
 - or those "art attack" kids programmes on TV... slowly build up picture from bits, and only when they finally pull back the camera do we get the full impression!
- **That's a bit like how Isaiah is operating:**
 - building up the picture of the promised one that has been revealed to him
 - putting together components that may seem disconnected
 - or not giving the complete picture...
 - *but as we allow the bits to build up and be integrated in our understanding of the Lord and his work they reveal Jesus.*

Exposition

(1) Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the LORD called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name.

- Couple of things:
 - **ends of the earth**, broad scope of God's plans; not small or limited; recurring theme in Scripture - in Acts this morning; we do have a tendency to limit, to become comfortable and safe!
 - timing - "**before I was born**"; long term planning by God; not just "OK, this looks a likely suspect, I'll use him as Messiah!" Clear that this is not just another prophet (who could talk about before their birth?), but God's unique Servant Messiah.
- **Together: an intentionality, a purposefulness about God's actions.** No accident; gives us a **confidence and a security in our faith!**

(2) He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver.

- The war imagery isn't meant to communicate a warlike Messiah; it's his words, his mouth which is compared to instruments of war:
 - a **sharp** sword is **effective**;
 - a **polished** arrow **flies straight and true**;
 - a quiver protects the effectiveness of the arrows within.
- I was talking with someone during the week, and they were telling me about a time when Tom Robertson was preaching during the vacancy when "it was like he was preaching just to me - right here (heart)..."
 - it wasn't Tom; it was the sharp sword of Messiah's words! Powerful, effective
- **So we allow them to speak to us:** in daily QT, in housegroup, in God's word read, in sermon

(3) He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendour."

- This servant song is embedded in a section of Isaiah which is discussing **Israel's plight** and her **abject failure to be who she was meant to be**
 - really, what Isaiah has come to realise is that **Israel the people are not worthy nor able to be the fulfilment of God's promises**;
 - does God acquiesce in this failure?
 - **NO! He transforms things** by finding a true and worthy Israel, the servant, the Messiah - **Jesus!**
- "**In whom I display my splendour**" - rare phrase in OT, and never (apart from here) used of any prophet or individual, or of the people Israel or any group within the people
 - Isaiah here says a unique thing about a unique person!

(4) But I said, "I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing. Yet what is due me is in the LORD's hand, and my reward is with my God."

- Can these really be the words of Messiah? "**I have labored to no purpose...!**"
 - real despondency; but what is expressed here is the first thought, not the last; to remain here would be to sink into despondency

- Jesus felt despair - at the disciples slowness of heart, at the people who refused to understand or respond to him, supremely in Gethsemane before he died.
- yet, as here, he put his hope in the Lord; whatever he felt - and he was honest enough to say he felt awful (sometimes we are bad at that, thinking being down is sub-Christian!) but even so he chose to place his trust, his confidence, to rest his identity in God.

(5) And now the LORD says - he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD and my God has been my strength-

- In passing, confirmation of the unique identity of the servant as Messiah:
 - Israel here and Israel in v.3 are clearly distinct!

(6) he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

- Again that thought of increased vision, God's greater purpose:
 - when do we limit God?
 - who do we consider Gentiles, but who God wants to shine his light upon? Yobs? Paki's? Those who are hardened, scornful of Jesus and his people?

(7) This is what the LORD says - the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel - to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers: "Kings will see you and rise up, princes will see and bow down, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

- This is the tail-piece, the confirmatory comment, for the song.
 - God of reversal - bowing down to the one who was despised and abhorred;
 - Jesus - despised, crucified, now glorified!
 - for us: ultimate vindication of our service comes from God, in his day, perhaps only on the day when he comes again;
 - but he is a God who delights to turn things around, to bring beauty out of brokenness, strength out of weakness, glory out of shame, outsiders to be on the inside...

(8) This is what the LORD says: "In the time of my favour I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you; I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people, to restore the land and to reassign its desolate inheritances, (9) to say to the captives, 'Come out,' and to those in darkness, 'Be free!'"

- Constant thread of promise to answer, to bring the servant success: I will....
- The nature of that success is in answering, saving, helping, keeping, restoring promised land, bringing an inheritance for those without one:
 - fourfold blessing of: security, enjoyment, liberation, transformation
 - in other words, when the time of the Lord's favour comes (Isaiah hasn't told us yet how the servant is involved in bringing such a time to be) things will be absolutely as God's will intends them to be

"They will feed beside the roads and find pasture on every barren hill. (10) They will neither hunger nor thirst, nor will the desert heat or the sun beat upon them. He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water. (11) I will turn all my mountains into roads, and my highways will be raised up. (12) See, they will come from afar - some from the north, some from the west, some from the region of Aswan."

- Picture of an exodus journey, journey of the heart through a barren land, from slavery (Egypt) to God (Israel):
 - provided for;
 - protected
 - given a guardian, a compassionate leadership that brings us into God's presence

(13) Shout for joy, O heavens; rejoice, O earth; burst into song, O mountains!
For the LORD comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.

- Conclusion to all this is world-wide joy, celebration, delight, song, celebration....

Conclusion

- God's big, intentional purpose!
 - reaching even the outsider, the Gentile
- Jesus' words have power - let him speak!
- Jesus is unique Lord, alone to be put first in our lives
- Jesus is our example in putting our trust in God even whilst openly acknowledging his despair
- Jesus will effect - how we've not yet explored from Isaiah - such a transformation of circumstance, providing security, enjoyment, liberation, transformation, sustenance, and bringing us into God's very presence (the Exodus journey)
- Rejoice, the Lord is King! Your Lord and King adore....