

Introduction

- Do you ever find yourself saying "Its all right for you...."?
 - you are telling someone who is mechanically minded about a time when your car had a flat and you had to call the AA - and they say "why didn't you just change it yourself...?"
 - you are talking to someone who doesn't have kids, and they say "why don't you just come out...."
- Or even, "it was all right for Jesus, he's God's son, it was different for him...!"
 - yet he did truly and fully enter into our experience, even into the way we have to learn!
- Come to our next snapshot of Jesus, the servant:

Exposition

(4) The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught.

- "instructed tongue" - tongue of one who is taught, who has him or herself listened; in other words, the servant, the Messiah, is the disciple (taught one) par excellence; he learns (listens for God's voice) and out of that speaks & acts
- "word that sustains the weary" - how to sustain the weary with a word, having that quality that is able to bring God's sustaining through words spoken to those who are weary, not so much physically as drained by their circumstances
- "morning by morning" - discipline of daily listening to and for God's word; lies behind the word that sustains!
 - not that we wring truth out of God by our persistence in meeting him each day!! Rather we open ourselves to all that God is already speaking to us, pay attention to those words that are already being spoken.
 - *hearing and listening!!*
- Good old fashioned Quiet Time!!
 - not denying the difficulties; in fact never more aware of how difficult it is! Vivid memories of some ladies with children pinning the minister I did my probation with up against the wall over some teaching on QTs and taking a Sunday off - *how!?!*
 - yet, we need to find some way of listening daily; perhaps need to be creative in the how; but there is an element of self-discipline that will reap rewards
 - *(easy area to be hypocritical - I struggle!!)*

(5) The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back.

- In v.5 we have the servant reflecting on his experience of this listening attentively to God:
 - as he listened he grew aware what it was that the Sovereign Lord desired of him;
 - and he *chose* to obey, to respond;
 - we don't know what it was yet - v.6 hints, and a fuller picture will emerge next week - but the language is telling:
 - *to not respond is to rebel.*

(6) I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.

- Here is the *servant's response* to God's call:
 - and *it costs him!*
- The language is that of a *judicial flogging*, almost of gratuitous torture, and certainly *personal humiliation*
 - within that there is no hint of the suffering being deserved - it comes as a *result of costly obedience*
 - sometimes true of us - obedience can be costly, in broken relationships ((Matthew 10:35) For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter

against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law... Sam Hosain), in terms of financial security ((Mark 10:21,22) Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.) - perhaps in many different ways...

(7) Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame.

- What is it that enables the servant to face such humiliation?
 - the help of the Sovereign Lord!
 - and of that help he is absolutely certain - "I know I will not be put to shame"
 - so certain of the Lord's help is he that he has a resolute determination to carry things through ("face like flint")
 - note contrast between "I will not be disgraced" and the "mocking" of the previous verse

(8) He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other! Who is my accuser? Let him confront me!

- Picture here is of a law court, with the servant in the dock:
 - whatever mess has gone alongside it, there has been a startling example of this in the news recently - the Paul Burrell trial:
 - *Diana's butler, in court on charges of theft, but when the Sovereign herself speaks he is vindicated!!*
 - "near" implies "on my side", not just "with me", helping me not just making me feel better!
- *The thought is: "I have done what God asked me to; it brought me shame, but I will be vindicated in the end, proved to have acted rightly - and if God is on my side, no one's accusations (even those of Satan himself) will stand up!"*
- There will be times when we feel ourselves out on a limb for God, not understood, going against the flow, with values painfully different from those around us.
 - what sustains? the fact that God will vindicate our choices, and that his help is at hand

(9) It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me. Who is he that will condemn me? They will all wear out like a garment; the moths will eat them up.

- The thought here is similar, though the imagery and emphasis changes somewhat.
 - the contrast is drawn between the permanence of the Lord and the impermanence of any accuser
- We suspect that my Peter has inherited his father's knees - for I go through the knees of trousers like I have razors embedded in my knees, and Peter does the same!!
 - I can never keep trousers for very long - they are impermanent!
 - that is how any accusation against those who act in accordance with God's call on their lives will be: a passing, transient accusation that has not eternal substance

(10) Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God. (11) But now, all you who light fires and provide yourselves with flaming torches, go, walk in the light of your fires and of the torches you have set ablaze. This is what you shall receive from my hand: You will lie down in torment.

- Verses 10 & 11 form the tail-piece; the song itself was autobiographical, the comment talks about the servant.
 - and its actually only here that we have explicit confirmation of the identity of the one whose words we've been studying!
- In the first two songs the tail-piece formed a confirmatory comment, spoken by God:
 - "that's my boy", kind of thing!

- Here it is an **exhortation for us to respond to the Servant:**
 - by accepting him as our model, the one we should seek to emulate
- That exhortation is couched in a contrast between **those who do (v.10)** and **those who don't (v.11)** take the servant as their model.
 - those who do seek to model themselves on him **allow his light to shine on them;**
 - those who do **not** seek to model themselves on him **try and provide their own lights**
- I remember being on **SU camp at Scoughall;** canvas; storm; out in it trying to reset tent pegs on the marquee so we didn't lose the canvas!!
 - started off trying to hold our own torches to see what we were doing; couldn't hold a hammer and peg and torch...
 - someone brought their **car** round and switched the **headlights** on!!
 - with proper illumination the task was much easier!

Conclusion

- So, let's seek to respond to that exhortation:
 - and **listen to God's word** that we may develop an "instructed tongue" and be used by God to "sustain the weary"
 - that we may be **obedient to God's call on our lives,** his directing our path, however uncomfortable or unpleasant that may be
 - and **find our identity, our security, our vindication** in the Lord and in his help, knowing that anyone else's accusations are empty!
- **May God grant us his grace to follow the path our servant Messiah trod!**