

Scripture Text

Isaiah 41.21-42.17

Context

From Isaiah 40-55, the prophet is addressing the Jewish captives far away in Babylon in the 6th century, announcing that God is going to come with world changing display of his glory (40.5). Isaiah 40 has begun with God offering comfort to his people, promising to restore them, revealing the eternity of his work and uniqueness of himself. In Chapter 40, he has given a great message of comfort, and now continues to show how he can be trusted to deliver on his message of comfort, because he is the Sovereign God over all history, and because he has chosen Israel.

Observation and Meaning

- 41.21-29: How does God compare himself to the idols and other false gods? How is God superior to these so-called deities? How does the Servant of 42.1-4 contrast to these idols?
- 42.1-4: What do we learn about the Servant from this passage? Who is this referring to? How does Matthew use it in his gospel and how does that help us understand it? (Matthew 12.18-21)?
- 42.5-9: How does God's address to the servant teach us about the nature of the servant's work, and the certainty of it's completion? How do we understand "covenant" in the light of the New Covenant (Matt 26.28)?
- 42.10-12: Who is doing the singing in these verses? What does this teach us about God's purpose of the nations being saved through the servant?
- 42.13-17: What is God promising to do, and what is the outcome for the rest of us?

Big Idea

In contrast to the futile idols of the nations that have no power, God is coming himself to bring true justice to the world through his humble Servant.

Connecting to Bible Storyline

Where sin plunged the world into idolatry, darkness and captivity, the true Servant comes to lead us to true worship, glorious light, and freedom through his work.

Sermon Outline

1. The Servant's mission – a rightly ordered world (42.1,4)
2. The Servant's manner – meek, tender and tenacious (42.2-3)
 - a. Meek
 - b. Tender
 - c. Tenacious
3. The Servant's confidence – certainty of success (42.5-9)
4. Singing for Joy (42.10-17)

Applications

- What are you prone to trust in other than God (41.21-29)? How do these verses help you see the futility of this?
- How is God different from all the other deities that promise so much and yet deliver so little?
- How does the humble nature of Jesus (42.2-3) make it easier for you to come to him in faith and trust that he is bringing justice to the world?
- V4 says that Jesus does not get discouraged. How does faith in Jesus help you in moments when you are tempted to be discouraged about your life, or God's plans in the world?
- What is God being praised for in 10-12 and how should we join in that praise?

Guide for Study Leaders

Use the C.O.M.A. (Context, Observation, Meaning, Application) method to work through the biblical text.

Context

Pay attention to the surrounding verses, paragraphs, chapters, events, etc. to see how this passage fits within the context of this particular book of the Bible.

Note how this passage fits within the larger storyline of the whole Bible, i.e. how God is saving a people through Jesus Christ to live under his rule in his place.

Observation & Meaning

Make careful observations of the biblical text. Notice details such as linking words (eg. "for", "if", "therefore"), repetition, dialogue, narrative, OT quotations, etc.

To understand the meaning of the biblical text, we need to discern the author's purpose or intent: Why is the biblical author writing this?

Helpful questions to ask include:

Who is writing and to whom?

What is the situation of the author and of the readers?

Are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed?

Are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

Application

Apply God's word to the heart. Move beyond merely addressing circumstances and behaviour by asking good "heart" questions. For example: Why do we do what we do? What do we really desire?

Always connect the gospel to application. For example, what difference does knowing Christ make to our obedience to God?

Ask what the passage teaches us about God, ourselves, salvation in Christ, the church, the world, etc.