Jesus the servant of the Lord

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[0:00] Now, can you turn with me in your Bibles again, this time to the book of Isaiah, Isaiah chapter 41. It's on page 726 if you're using a church Bible.

We're going to read Isaiah 41 from verse 21 into chapter 42. We're going to focus our attention on the first nine verses of chapter 42, but we'll read from verse 41 for a bit of context as we think about Jesus, the servant of the Lord.
So Isaiah 41 at verse 21. Present your case, says the Lord. Set forth your arguments, says Jacob's king. Bring in your idols to tell us what's going to happen. Tell us what the former things were so that we may consider them and know their final outcome.
Or declare to us the things to come. Tell us what the future holds so that we may know you are God's. Do something, whether good or bad, so that we will be dismayed and filled with fear.
But you are less than nothing, and your works are utterly worthless. He who chooses you is detestable. I have stirred up one from the north, and he comes, one from the rising sun who calls on my name.
[1:15] He treads on rulers as if they were mortar, as if he were a potter treading the clay. Who told of this from the beginning so that we could know, or beforehand so that we could say he was right?

No one told of this. No one foretold it. No one heard any words from you. I was the first to tell Zion. Look, here they are. I gave to Jerusalem a messenger of good tidings.
I look, but there is no one. No one among them to give counsel. No one to give answer when I ask them. See, they are all false. Their deeds amount to nothing. Their images are but wind and confusion.
Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight. I will put my spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations.
He will not shout or cry out or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break. In a smouldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice.
[2:15] He will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope. This is what God the Lord says.

He who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spreads out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people and life to those who walk on it. 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, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison, and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.
I am the Lord. That is my name. I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. See, the former things have taken place and new things I declare.
Before they spring into being, I announce them to you. Amen. So sometimes people speak about the current generation as the choice generation.
[3:26] You may have heard of the acronym FOMO, the fear of missing out. I came across another one this week, FOMO, the fear of better options.

And I wonder if some of us can identify with that. When there's an endless choice in life for almost anything, from toothbrushes to job opportunities, from holidays to what to watch on the television, the result can be choice paralysis.
If I make this choice, if I go through this door, that's going to close off these options. And what if these are the better options? What if there's something better out there for me?

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And people can be paralyzed by too much choice. And one of the reasons why it's so unhelpful for us is because we can be so tied up in thinking about these choices that ultimately don't matter that much that we can forget the one choice that really does.
And that brings us to God's message to Israel, to the nations, and to ourselves today in the book of Isaiah. And it's all about worship.
[4:35] It's all about what we choose to make most valuable, most significant, where we look to for meaning. When it comes to worship, God says, choose me and choose my servant.

Don't choose an idol. This section's actually part of a bigger section that presents the choice before us. Isaiah 41 to 46.
It repeatedly goes back to this idea that the idols that people follow are hollow. They fail to deliver on their promises. They lack power to save.
They cannot know or control the future. The idols in Isaiah's day were statues made of wood or gold or silver.
But an idol can be anything that we worship because we hope that it will protect us, that in some way it will save us, that it will grant us success, it will give value to life.
[5:39] So for us today, we might not have statues, but we might be pinning all our hopes on a career perhaps, or a relationship, or a series of relationships.

We could place all our hopes in political institutions or financial security. Here's our choice today. God gives us a courtroom picture. Present your case. That's how our reading went. On the one hand, there are the idols. You can choose to follow those idols, or God says, here is my servant. Here is the servant of the Lord, the one who the New Testament reveals to us as Jesus. Here is this figure who will take the stage of history to serve as a worldwide redeemer, who is the answer to the darkness, who provides light and truth.
So we're going to think about Jesus, the servant of the Lord, this morning, thinking about why, if we're Christians, we are to keep on following the servant of the Lord.
[6:54] And if we're not Christians, here's why we should consider, why we should follow Jesus. The first reason is connected to his identity.

Even as we read verse 1, it becomes very clear that this servant is God's man who will be on God's mission. So Isaiah 42 verse 1, here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight. I will put my spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. God's servant who is upheld, given power for his task.
But he's not just a servant, he's also the chosen one. He is one who is loved, that God delights in him. And we see that he acts for God. God's spirit is on him and he brings justice.
He brings the rule of God to the nations. An idea repeated in verse 1 and then again in verse 4. And then in verses 5 and 6, the same kind of idea comes up again.
[7:59] Here is God the Lord, here is the creator of the world, here is the sustainer of the world speaking. And in verse 6, we see God's purpose for his servant.

We see all the purpose language. I 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.
What's the identity of this servant? He is one who is loved of God and who is sent by God on a mission to establish the kingdom of God, to bring people into relationship with God, to be the hope of the nations.
And it's as if God is saying, you need to decide which you're going to choose. Are you going to choose the genuine article, this servant, or will you choose what is fake? Just as, I guess nowadays, if we shop on the internet, we need to be careful on Amazon that we get the real deal and not a counterfeit, or we go to a market, need to check what you're getting.
God is saying to us, the idols cannot supply what we need. What we look to from them, they will not be able in the end to deliver, though they might claim to.
[9:14] Think for a minute about the world of advertising. Advertising exists to persuade you that life will be complete when you have that thing that they're trying to sell us. The reality is that staff and people, they provide temporary happiness, but God invites us to think bigger and to look bigger.

That the Christian message provides solid joy and lasting treasure because it invites us to know God himself. Because we were created in the image of God to know and enjoy him.

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We're created with never-dying souls. And so the idols are not big enough to satisfy. But God is going to send his servant, he says, in Isaiah's day.
And even the identity of the servant sparks hope. And especially as we read in light of Jesus coming, do you remember what's said of Jesus' public arrival?
Jesus, God's king, who's also God's servant, very different arrival. Then the arrival of the royal wedding yesterday with the fancy carriage and all the pomp and ceremony. Jesus came, was placed in a manger.
[10:32] And then when he began his public ministry, he came to John the Baptist to be baptized in the Jordan River. And what happened? The Spirit of God came on him, came on the servant.

The voice from heaven spoke, this is my son whom I love. Listen to him. And what was the message of Jesus as he began moving around preaching and teaching?
It was repent and believe for the kingdom of God is near. Here is the servant with the spirit on him who's loved by God, who's bringing in the kingdom through his life.
So Jesus is no ordinary man. He is God's man. Indeed, he is the God man on God's rescue mission. So we follow Jesus, we are called to follow Jesus because of who he is.
Because he is God the Son on God's mission. Another reason is presented to us for following Jesus in verses 2 and 3 and it's tied into the character of the servant.
[11:38] So we've just been told that this servant will come and he will establish justice in the nations and that's a powerful role and responsibility but then we're told in verses 2 and 3 how he goes about his work and it's both surprising and also attractive.

We've got this combination of power with gentleness. So he's come to establish to bring justice to the nations but look at verse 2.
He will not shout or cry out or raise his voice in the streets. He's not brash. He's not harsh.
He doesn't seek to dominate or rule by force. Verse 3. A bruised reed he will not break.
He's gentle with what seems weak what might be considered in other hands worthless. A smouldering wick he will not snuff out protecting even that which seems so fragile as to be close to extinction.
[12:57] Jesus the servant of the Lord is powerful but he's also gentle. this is the kind of person that we want in our lives that when we find ourselves with trouble or with questions or in crisis someone who we can go to who is able to understand and help but more than that someone who wants to help somebody who wants to draw near to show us love and to show us mercy mercy.

And I think we all know this is not a common combination to find the people in the places of power who are still gentle with those under them.
And so often it's those who are gentle who lack the power to help when they would love to help. But here is the servant who is both powerful and gentle.
To give us a picture think of a lion a female lion out on the hunt. As that lion pounces on her prey you have those huge powerful jaws capable of tearing an animal apart.
There is power in the animal and in those jaws but those same jaws will also carry her cubs very tenderly to safety. Only Jesus demonstrates ultimate strength and applies that same strength in tender gentle ways.
[14:35] When we see Jesus in the gospels we find one who has the power to drive away demons. We find him overturning the tables of money changers who are oppressing those who would want to worship God.

We see one who is powerful enough to call the dead to life. to offer forgiveness to those who have sinned. But then as we read in Matthew chapter 12 we saw that this description in verses 2 and 3 was also applied to Jesus and we see that in his life too.
We see Jesus very gentle with those in pain. We see Jesus loving to those who have been rejected. We see Jesus tender to those who found themselves in their lowest places in very dark spaces because Jesus is the perfect saviour.
He is the saviour we all need. One who is stronger than all the forces of darkness that line up against us and that lined up against him. Paul says in Colossians that Jesus triumphed over all the forces of darkness.
Satan, sin, death, conquering them at the cross. Jesus is the one who has dealt with the sin that separates us from God.

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[16:02] He has taken the judgment that we deserve that separates us and would lead us into eternal separation from God. Jesus is the one who deals gently with his people.

He knows us, he knows our weakness and still he loves us and still he cares for us. So you and I we can trust him and we should trust him.
Another reason to follow Jesus is because of the mission that he has been sent on. Already in this section the contrast between the idols and the servant is becoming apparent but God goes still further to show Israel, to show the nations, to show us why we should choose Jesus and not anyone else to live for.
In verses 6 and 7, the Lord capital letters, the personal God, the promise making God goes further to help us choose wisely. If we go towards the bottom half of verse 6, we see this, I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.
What are the mission objectives of the servant of the Lord, the one who will be sent? He's sent to bring relationship, a relationship restored between God and people.
[17:37] He comes for restoration from darkness and misery to light and life. Notice the language in verse 6, I will make you to be a covenant.

This servant, this Jesus is God's means through whom people will come into a covenant relationship with the Lord God himself. There is no other way to know God except through Jesus and trusting what he has done for us.
In Isaiah's day, there were many people, although they were God's covenant people, they were living without reference to God. in trouble, they didn't pray to God.
In trouble, they were looking to foreign alliances to deliver them. They were faithless, but here is hope for them despite that lack of faith because God is faithful.
God keeps his covenant promises and this servant who will come stands as proof of that. Can I trust that God will love me, that God will save me?
[18:43] Yes, because he sent Jesus his servant as he promised. And he does it as a free decision. God freely decides out of love to take and keep a people for himself.

Not based on a person's goodness or a religious performance, but based wholly on God's grace. The servant is the basis for a covenant being established.
And we see how this works out. In the life of Jesus. Next week here in church as the people of God we will share the Lord's Supper. Taking us back to the last supper that Jesus shared with his disciples before the cross where he took the bread and the wine as symbols of his body broken and his blood shed for sin and for sinners.
A reminder that at the cross Jesus dies for our sin. Jesus dies for us choosing to live without reference to him. He dies for that sin of choosing false saviors for ourselves.
He dies for our false worship where we choose to live for other things rather than the glory of God. God. And the result of that death in our place and for our sins is that by faith we can be reconciled to the living God.
[20:14] That barrier of sin is broken. That we can be welcomed into the family of God. We can be adopted as sons and daughters of the king with all the promises that comes with that.

Here we are reminded that God in the Bible offers us the kind of relationship that we all long for and perhaps spend all of our lives looking for.
Here is one who will love us. Here is one who knows our weaknesses, knows everything about us, yet still moves towards us rather than running from us.
Here is one who promises always to be there for us in life and in death. Here is the kind of love that moves us and causes us to be better people as he puts his spirit in us.
So he offers us a covenant relationship. And who is this covenant for? Well in verse 6 we're told it's a covenant for the people. In verse 1 there's a reminder that the servant comes for the nations.
[21:32] In verse 4 this servant is the one that the islands will put their hope in. The islands is a picture of the remote places. In other words this covenant, this promise of relationship is for anyone, is for everyone who will turn from sin and trust in Jesus as Savior.

So there's this wonderful picture of the servant coming to bring relationship but also coming to bring restoration. To pick up on the language of verses 6 and 7 that in place of darkness he will bring light.

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In place of blindness he will bring sight. In place of captivity and misery the servant of the Lord will bring freedom.
This powerful Savior, this gentle Savior offers to us hope and healing beyond our failures.
You know yourself, I know myself, you know the stuff that lurks in our past that causes us grief and sorrow and keeps us awake at night. There is hope beyond that.
[22:46] There is hope beyond our bad choices. Those bad choices do not need to define us. we can be defined by our being in Christ and having hope in him.

There is hope beyond guilt and shame through this servant. This was the manifesto of Jesus to come and to restore lives that were broken and hurting.
When Jesus as a visiting preacher came back to his hometown in Nazareth, he was invited to pick up a scroll and to read and to teach. In Luke 4, we are told that he read from Isaiah.
He read from Isaiah 61. Let me read the verses there. The spirit of the sovereign Lord is on me because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives, and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.
[23:52] Jesus said, this is speaking about me. This is what I've come to do. I've come to restore. And his public ministry, if you read the Gospels, read the Gospels, and it's evidence of that kind of ministry.

And his death on the cross serves as the ultimate demonstration of that reality where Jesus himself is broken and he is crushed so that we can be made new.
His death is the price of our redemption and new life. last reason why we should follow Jesus or keep following Jesus is connected to his glory.
It takes us to verses 8 and 9. Why does God send the servant of the Lord? Why does he send the one that he loves? Why does he send this one who will establish God's reign of justice?
Why does he send this one who gently deals with people, who establishes this covenant of life and peace and brings restoration and healing? And we discover ultimately it's for his glory.
[24:57] I am the Lord. That is my name. I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. The servant's coming is connected to God having the glory that is due his name.

God's goal is that he receive the praise that he deserves as our creator and as our redeemer. And that's why in this section 41 to 46 so often he's contrasting his glory versus the worthlessness of idols.
So in verse 9, another example, God knows and controls the future unlike the idols. Jesus will come as promised just as other deliverers had come as promised.
Here is God calling the people to recognize that we can pin our hopes on many things but ultimately Jesus is our only hope in life and in death.
And what we discover in the New Testament is that Jesus comes to reveal, to display the glory of God to us. We start looking midweek in the book of Colossians and we read that he is, Jesus is, the image of the invisible God.
[26:16] That the fullness of God is found in him. So when it comes to the servant, there is no rivalry here because this servant is the son of God.

So he deserves all praise and glory. When Jesus was contemplating the cross, he prayed, Father, glorify your name.
Bring glory to yourself through the cross. And the answer comes from heaven. I have glorified it and I will glorify it again.
The cross is the revelation of the glory of God that he can satisfy justice against sin and be loving and extend grace to sinners like us.
The center of Christianity is the loving kindness of God and eternally planning to send his son Jesus to rescue us from sin. Not so that we would get praise, but so that he would get praise and glory.
[27:18] We are called to follow Jesus because when we look at him, when we look into his face, we see, as Paul says, the glory of God in the face of Jesus.

And we also see the glory of God in his nail-pierced hands as he goes to the cross in love to rescue us, to redeem us, to restore us to relationship.
So here is God saying to us, here is why you are to keep following Jesus. If you're not a Christian, to begin following Jesus.
Jesus. Thank you.

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