

The servants

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[0:00] Okay, right. Anyway, let's be serious. So for the grown-ups, I was going to ask about problems that we think God ought to be solving.

! Why does a God of love allow? Why does a God of love allow me to miss my bus? It's a rather trivial thing, isn't it? You might say, why does God allow that? Why does God allow me not to get paid as much as other people? That seems very unfair. Why does God allow that?

Or why does God allow me not to have the ox, donkey, house, wife, husband, family, education, looks, gifts that my neighbor has?

That is from a certain list of things. Anybody know what that certain list of things is? There's ten of them. In Ten Commandments, the last one says, if God doesn't give you the same ox, donkey, house, wife, husband, etc. as your neighbor, you're not to be jealous of them.

Because God gives you what you want. Anyway, you might say, why does God give me something different? And then you might say, well, actually, let's not make it trivial. Let's make climate change. Why doesn't God solve that problem?

[1:17] Or the friends in Sri Lanka were talking about their situation of the government, which they say is a corrupt government. Why does God allow injustice, corrupt governments, things like that?

Why doesn't God just sort out our messed up world? It's a big question. Why does God allow things to go wrong? Can he do anything about any of these?

Will he do anything about any of these? How will he do anything about any of these? How will God sort out our messed up world?

Now, boys and girls, I'm just going to backtrack now. Can you help us with this map? So we had a map and we were looking for Jerusalem. Can anybody remember which of those dots is Jerusalem?

Which of those places is Jerusalem? Jerusalem. I'll give you a start. It's that one there. Okay, that's Jerusalem.

[2:18] So that's the centre of the things that God did. And that was the home for Isaiah. And then Judah.

Can anybody remember this from last week? Yeah, go on then. Is it the witch? Is it that one?

It isn't actually. It's that one. So Judah is the southern kingdom where Jerusalem is capital. And then Israel is the northern kingdom, just there.

And then last time we were looking at a threat from the kingdoms even further north there. And that's what we were looking at last time and the people of God were threatened.

They thought there's a real problem here. That was a threat. Now, Egypt. Anybody like to say where Egypt is? It's the yellow one. Yeah, okay. Well done.

[3:18] Yep. It's the yellow one. That's Egypt. Just pausing to welcome our summer. We can begin now.

And Assyria was a real big problem. And I'm not quite sure which of these was Assyria when I drew them. Let's assume it was that one.

And that is a real big threat to Jerusalem. And they came and invaded the north and took away everybody from the north but left the south.

They just didn't manage to defeat the south. But then later, the Babylonians came and just wiped out everything and took the people as slaves back to Babylon.

So that's a little bit of the history. And you need to remember that a little bit because that was the problem that God was solving for those people. And that's problems for God to solve.

[4:16] In the time of Isaiah, to sort out his messed up people because his people weren't trusting him. And to make the failed city into the faithful city.

And at the time we're reading of now, the city had actually... Oh, I can't give you that map because it's not there. The city had been destroyed and the people had been taken into exile.

The people were in chains in Babylon, far across the desert. And the question for them, can God solve this? Is Babylon too strong for the Lord?

Babylon has defeated Jerusalem, taken away the people. Can God do anything about that? Or is Babylon too strong for the Lord? One of the other things that the Lord has said he would do was sort out not just his own people, but the nations, all the nations too.

And how on earth can God do that? How can he sort out the messed up nations? As he said, all the nations will flow to the Lord's house. How will he do that? So just a reminder that the Assyrians had devastated the north.

[5:21] The Assyrians had devastated the north. And the Babylonians have now taken the people from the south into exile. That's the specific problem that they're facing. And the same question, can God sort this out?

Will he sort it out? How will he sort it out? Okay, now boys and girls. You see those pictures in the background there? Can you spot any differences between them?

Any differences? They're actually all the same. I just copied them. There's three of them, but as far as I can see, they're identical.

And I'm going to be introducing you to how God solved the problems for his people, and how he will solve the problems for the world by his servants.

So what we're going to look at this morning is, first of all, God versus idols, and then I'm going to introduce you to these servants. There's the worm servant, the victorious servant, and the ideal servant.

[6:38] And if you like, one, two, three, one, two, three servants. And at first sight, these servants look just like all the same.

When you look more closely, to these servants, you might have actually different. Have you ever looked in a shop window where you've got several panes of glass, and there's three reflections of you?

Have you ever done that? You think, oh, is that me, or is that me? What does that mean? And these servants are a little bit like that. A funny reflection, like a reflection in a thick glass window.

How many people here know Katie and Mitchie? Katie and Mitchie, okay. And what's special about Katie and Mitchie regarding each other?

They're twins. How many people here have mixed up Katie and Mitchie? Okay. Right. Well, these servants are a little bit like that, a little bit like twins or triplets.

[7:44] But when you look more closely, you can see the differences between them. So first of all, before we get to these three servants, I want to look at one of these things.

And I've got a reference for it. Come on. 41, 7 to 10. So we're actually going to look at some bits of the Bible and put them together, sort of one after another.

So if you've got a Bible that you can look at, boys and girls, or somebody that you can look across to help you, and then I'll ask you some questions about this. So this is God versus idols.

An idol, I-D-O-L, is a made-up God. And you can make them up from metal or wood, or in your mind, mental.

It can be a mental image or a metal image. And 41, 7 to 10, says this. Let me see if I can write the book.

[8:50] Oh, yes, that's right. 41, 7 to 10. Listen to this. The craftsman encourages the goldsmith, who smooths with the hammer and spurs on him who strikes the angle.

He says of the welding, eat his food, and he nails down the idol so that it will not topple. But you, O Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham, my king, I took you from the ends of the earth, from its furthest corners I called you, and I said, You are my servant.

I have chosen you, have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God.

I will strengthen you and help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. There's a contrast there between what God says to people who are trusting in him and the people who are trusting in idols.

So there's an idol. I've tried to draw one. It's supposed to be an idol sitting on the ground there with some things to pop it up. And it said something about the nails.

[10:24] He says of the welding, it is good, he nails down the idol so that it will not topple. Now, boys and girls, what's the point about the nails? What does it say about these nails?

Yeah. So you say, do this first sentence again.

They nail it down so that it won't fall over. Yeah. And you have another sentence. Yeah, but that's the point. Yeah, they nail it down so that it won't fall over.

So I think that's something you've got to run across for that. Well done. So this idol, which they're looking to for help and strength, if they don't nail it down properly, it will fall over.

Which is pathetic, isn't it? Because if you're worshipping an idol and saying, oh, idol, help me, strengthen me, and you have to actually nail the idol down so it doesn't fall over, it's pretty pathetic.

[11:33] The Lord says he's not like that. Now, here's a question. Are idols inside this world or outside it? Are idols inside this world or outside it?

Inside it. How do we know they're inside it? What things were mentioned that were very definitely inside this world? They're not God.

Is that what you've said? They're not God. Yeah, they're not God. Yeah, absolutely. They're not God who made everything.

They're part of what's been made. So, friend, I'll pause for that. Well done. So, I'm just going to just push this again. What was there in the text that is definitely inside this world that it says about the idols?

So, one thing is nails. Of course, nails are part of this world. Anything else? Wood and metal.

[12:43] They're all part of this world, aren't they? The wood and the metal. They're first. So, yeah. The idols are inside. Oh, she gets around the claws as well. Yeah, okay. Let's look at something else about the idols.

So, I've now come to 42 verses 8 and 9. Now, listen to this one, boys and girls. This is the Lord speaking again talking about idols. He says, 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. Now, what can God do that idols can't do? From that text.

See, the former things have taken place, new things I declare. I declare before they spring into being, I announce them to you. What's that?

[13:47] Good. Well done. That's very good theology. Yes. The idols, because they're part of this world, can only think, they don't even think, do they?

It's all limited by this world, by the causes and effects in this world. But God can say, I'm going to tell you something that you could never guess from this will and this world.

I can do things from outside and tell you from outside. Before these things happen, I'll tell them to you. So that's something that only God can do. And did you notice how he says that he's jealous about something?

What does he say he's jealous about, boys and girls? I've used the word jealous. He doesn't use the word jealous. But that's what it means, where God says, I will not something.

I will not give my glory to another. Well done. Yeah. So God says, look, I'm in charge of the world. I say what's going to happen. Don't ask those idols.

[14:54] They don't know a thing about it. Don't give my glory to them. I won't have that. God says, I don't give my glory to anybody else.

I'm in charge. I'm the Lord. You worship me. How ridiculous to be propping up idols and looking to them. You see what I mean? It's a very strongly book. Let's look at 44, 9 to 21.

44, 9 to 21. This is really quite sharp. So I'll read this, boys and girls.

This is about idols. 44, 9 to 21. All who make idols are nothing. And the things they treasure are worthless. Those who would speak up for them are blind.

They are ignorant to their own shame. Who shapes a god and casts an idol which can profit him nothing? He and his kind will be put to shame. Craftsmen are nothing but men.

[15:54] Let them all come together and take their stand. They will be brought down to terror and infamy. A blacksmith takes a tomb and works it with a and works it with the poles.

and shapes an army and works it with a man. and he forges it with a light of his arm. And he gets hungry and loses his strength and drinks no water and goes to have a cup of coffee because he's grown hungry.

The carpenter measures with a line and makes an outline with a marker and he roughs it out with chills and marks it out with compasses and he shapes it in the form of a man and the man and the man is gone.

But it may dwell in his shrine and he cuts down cedars or the apse or cypress or oak. He let it grow among the trees of the forest and planted the pine and the rain made it grow.

It is man's fuel for burning. Some of it he takes and warms himself. He kindles a fire and he bakes bread. And he also passions a god and worships it.

[17:00] He makes an idol and bows down to it. And half the wood he burns in the fire and over it he prepares his meal. He roasts his meat and eats his food.

And he warms himself and says I'm warm. I see the fire. And with the rest he makes a god. His idol and he bows down to it and worships it and he prays to it and says Save me you are my god.

They know nothing. They understand nothing. Their eyes are plastered over so that they cannot see. Their minds closed so that they cannot understand.

No one stops to think. No one has the knowledge or understanding to say Half of it I'm used for fuel. I even bake bread over its coals. I roasted meat and I ate.

Shall I make an idol a detestable thing and what is love? Shall I bow down to a black woman? He feeds on ashes for the eluded heart this week's sake.

[17:58] He cannot save himself or say Is not this thing in my right hand no lie? Remember these things O Jacob for you are my servant O Israel I have made you you are my servant Israel I will not forget you I have swept away your offences like a cloud your sins like a mourning mist return to me for I have redeemed you.

See God is contrasting the idols which are the stupid and pathetic of God in this power so boys and girls does God say idols are okay really?

I want to run out of time which I probably will but let's let me just have a quick I'm just going to remind us of verse 4 chapter 45 verse 18 but this is what the Lord says He who created the heavens He is God He fashioned and made the earth He founded it this huge difference that idols have to be made by clever people that God made everything and that's a huge difference the Lord God is not inside this world but outside it and I was going to ask whether Jesus is in our God because usually the answer is Jesus so I was going to say is idol is it who is an idol what do you think?

He is the representation of God and He is what idols pretend to be but Jesus is it really He is the real expression the Lord it must be like the visible version the Lord is the creator God He really is great He really does work He really does control events that's who God is and we'll stop and sing a song we're going to sing in phase number 115 not to us before He given but to Him who reigns above and I do start using my servants so let me introduce you to the worm servant and this is Israel Israel was supposed to be a light to the Gentiles but she didn't do that she actually was even worse than the Gentiles who came like them instead of them becoming like her so these can we read Isaiah 40 I think that should be 41 verse 8

I'm going to ask you of course and girls what animal is in here so listen out for animal 41 this is 41 verse 8 you O Israel my servant Jacob whom I have chosen I'm going to go down to verse 10 do not fear for I am with you I will strengthen you and help you and uphold you by my righteous right

hand verse 11 and all who rage against you will surely be ashamed and disgraced those who oppose you will be as nothing and perish though you search for your enemies you will not find them those who wage war against you will be as nothing at all for I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you do not fear I will help you do not be afraid O worm Jacob O little Israel for I myself will help you declares the Lord your Redeemer the Holy One of Israel I will make you into a threshing sledge new and sharp with many teeth you will crush the mountains and thresh them and reduce the hills and chaff you will winnow them and the wind will pick them up and a gale will blow them away but you will rejoice in the Lord and glory in the Holy One of Israel wow

[22:38] I thought it was a worm well done yeah so this servant is like a worm why do you think he says it is like a worm what is noticeable about a worm how many of you have ever been attacked by a worm haven't they okay what do you think I've got to think I could there's a worm W something something K worms are W something something K what do you think well done yeah weak so this is the worm servant the worm servant is weak and what sort of thing will God make the worm servant into did you notice you may get some help from mum and dad just make sure they're awake ask them what will God make the worm servant into a threshing sledge I remember looking at what a threshing sledge is

I'm not absolutely sure I think it's something that sort of crushes the harvest and squashes it to pieces in a strong sort of way anyway something strong oh dear couldn't be the answer already okay let's look at 42 well done on that thank you 42 verse 18 this is the worm servant so now I'm in 42 verse 18 where it says hear you deaf look you blind and see who is blind like my servant and deaf like the messenger I send who is blind like the one committed to me blind like the servant of the Lord you see many things you see many things you see many things your ears are open but you hear nothing please the Lord for the sake of his righteousness to make his law great and glorious but this is a people plundered and looted they are trapped in pits hidden away in prisons they have become plunder with no one to rescue them they have become mute with no one to save so they are not in a very good place they have problems to go what did it say about the worm servant what happened to the worm servant trapped in pits yes trapped in pits and what else does it say hidden away in yeah this is the worm servant like a prisoner like somebody trapped where are they well they are in Babylon remember these are the people that got taken away to Babylon and there they are wait a minute it's just there they are in Babylon

Babylon where they have the Tower of Babel where they have the waters of Babylon by the waters of Babylon we sat and wept we hung our hearts from the willows and there they are there's the worm servant trapped in chains over there in Babylon far away from God imprisoned blind dead and I'm going to say the answer is usually Jesus two questions is this Jesus my wife says no what do you think about the boys and girls is this Jesus what do you think you think no okay but I wonder whether Jesus ever became righteous is Jesus ever treated like a criminal is Jesus ever put in a position of weakness is Jesus ever sort of put somewhere where he couldn't get away what do you think when he was on the cross all you can say you're the best the worm servant isn't Jesus but Jesus became like this servant and this servant is like us actually this is without God that's what we are dead blind imprisoned stuck far away from God that's what it's like to be somebody who is not a Christian and that's what these people are like they're not being what God wanted them to be and can they ever be changed that's the thing weak imprisoned distant from God slaves and hopeless right

I'm going to go on to the next servant the victorious servant and this servant is a little bit shocking we might not have time to do all the servants this morning so it could be something to look forward to over summer holidays but this servant is a bit shocking so boys and girls help me with this one this one is in 4 to 12 to 4 this is a servant that God is says I'm going to sort this out I'll get this servant to work so he says this who has stirred up one from the east calling him in righteousness to his service he hands nations over to him he subdues kings before him he turns them to dust with his sword to windblown chaff with his bow he pursues them and moves on unscathed by a path his feet have not travelled before who has done this and carried it through calling forth the generations from the beginning

I the Lord with the first of them and with the last I am so here is this servant and boys and girls is this servant defeated what is it saying about the servant he's not defeated he's victorious and who

makes him do this who makes him so strong that he's not defeated God does thank you absolutely right two good answers and God says look I'm doing this I the Lord you're the first I'm the first and the last I'm in charge of everything I can do this from the outside I don't have to get anybody's permission I can make this and I'm going to make this king so victorious and this king is actually this king is

[30:25] King Cyrus he's a person in history he wasn't a Babylonian king but he was in the place that it was the kingdom or the empire that replaced the Babylonians the Medes and Persians took over under the empire and you know what Cyrus did he sent the exiles home and they'd been stuck in prison they were stuck in exile for 70 years and you think how will they ever get home and God said I'm going to do this I'm going to raise up King Cyrus and I'm going to put it in his head and I'm going to put it in his head and I'm going to do it and send those people in the room and that's exactly what he did and he did it for other nations as well and it was a policy that he had but God says I'm going to make this happen and I'll tell you about it before it ever happens and none of the idols have even guessed this I'm going to tell you before it happens because I'm the first and the last and I'll make this happen and that's King Cyrus he sets the prisoners free he sets the prisoners free let's just look at one more thing probably we should stop in a minute 45 verses 4 to 6 this is King Cyrus again 45 verses 4 to 6 the Lord says

I summon you by name and give you a title of honour though you do not acknowledge me I am the Lord there is no other apart from me there is no God I will strengthen you though you have not acknowledged me so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides me I am the Lord there is no other I form the light I create the darkness I bring prosperity and create disaster I the Lord do all these things there is something a bit shocking which is does Cyrus know that God is doing this verse 4 does Cyrus know that God is doing this nothing hidden in the word that was used there it says you have not acknowledged me you could translate it you do not know me so I am asking the question do you think Cyrus knew what was going on do you think Cyrus prayed every day to the Lord and asked for guidance you don't know me says the Lord you have not acknowledged me but I have raised you up and I will make sure that you set my people free and people could say well that cannot be right

God can't use him he doesn't even pray he is not even a Christian he is certainly not even a Jew and God says well don't complain go to him who quarrels with his maker verse 9 you can't complain about what I do but it is a weird thing a strange thing I am going to use this king who has no idea about the Bible no idea about me he is going to do exactly what I want him to do he is going to set my people free is it okay for God to do this God says look I can do anything I want I am the creator of the ends of the earth the kings are in my hands I can raise up King Cyrus I can put him down I can raise up Donald Trump I can raise up Joe Biden I can put them down I can raise up Boris Johnson I can put him down I can raise up Man Hancock I can put him down I can do anything I want I can raise up Vladimir Putin I can put him down do anything I want with any of these kings don't complain to me because I am in charge woe to him who falls with his maker and God says this is me this is what I can do and I am just going to ask you this question because usually the answer is

Jesus so the victorious king boys and girls is this Jesus the victorious king is it Jesus what do you think do you think yes why do you think yes Jesus control everything thank you very much that's good well done is this Jesus so one answer is yes there's another answer no and we're about to answer no and say no well I'm sorry it would be true I'm sorry having this sort of firework displayed behind me all the time didn't matter too much is it

Jesus knew that wouldn't he it would be true to say that Jesus didn't know that King Cyrus didn't know that but it would be true to say Jesus who sets the prisoners free Cyrus set the prisoners free so Cyrus is a sort of version of Jesus but not the full version he doesn't do the whole thing he's sort of like Jesus but not Jesus actually he's like the King who sets the prisoners free he sets the prisoners free his blood can make the power of the screen his blood can raise him that's Jesus isn't it he does that and the last servant was the ideal servant I think I just have to do this very quickly this is in chapter 42 and this is what Ray read to us and this servant says here is my servant whom I

uphold my chosen one in whom I delight

[36:58] I 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 a smouldering wick he will not snuff out in faithfulness he will bring forth justice he will not bolter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth in his law the islands put their hope and just reading from that boys and girls you're still with me do you think God finds any fault with this servant his own problems with this servant as the worm servant was blind and deaf and the victorious servant didn't know God but this servant right at the beginning does God find any fault with this servant which bit of text makes you say no okay that's a good thing you bring justice to the nations excellent yeah well done thank you for that yeah yeah you get a little ripple there and Bethany was going to say in whom I delight that's the bit

I was thinking of well done yes and this servant is absolutely brilliant and God says this servant is the real thing he is a brilliant servant there's no problem with him he is my chosen one in whom I delight and when Jesus came on the scene when he was baptized there was a voice from heaven saying this is this is the one in whom my soul delights this is Jesus it really is Jesus I'm just going to flick through the rest because I think I've trespassed on your patience enough he does all sorts of good things he brings justice and he brings the nations and God the creator says I'm going to do this this is verse 5 God the Lord says who created the heavens and stretched them out I'm calling you I'm behind all this and in verse 7 he opens the eyes that are blind he sets free the captives from prison he releases from the dungeon those who sit in darkness

I am the Lord he says I don't give my glory to another one I'm going to do this this servant will sort everything out he will raise up my people he will bring in the Gentiles he'll do the whole thing and this is Jesus this is Jesus he is the one who really sorts everything out and I'll just go on quickly can God solve the problems of the world will he solve the problems of the world how will he solve the problems of the world he sorts out his messed up people he takes this ideal servant who we haven't got time to go through this but the ideal servant becomes like the worm servant in order to do the work of the victorious servant and set his people free and is Babylon too strong for the Lord absolutely not God can bring people back from Babylon he sets the prisoners free and he uses his victorious servant to do it can he sort out the messed up nations yes because the ideal servant will raise up the nations and we're invited to see this is God this is what he does this is how he does it he does amazing things in his awesomeness and powerfulness and he uses his servant to do it he takes this servant this Jesus born as a baby in weakness dying on the cross and he says this is my servant this is the one in whom my soul delights this is the one

I'm upholding this is the one through whom I will solve everything for everybody who turns to him and I just want to commend to you this Jesus don't be too worried about what's going on behind he does it all via his servant the great creator God has set himself the task of solving the big problems for all humanity and his almighty is focused into his servant and this is the great point of the New Testament which says Jesus is the servant Jesus is the one through whom God redeems Jesus is that servant and we think of the magnitude of Jesus the centrality of Jesus the magnificence of Jesus and I leave you with this thought is he magnificent and wonderful for you is he the one whose service you have received has he redeemed you is he the centre of your life do you see in him the be all and end all the best thing that's ever happened to you all your hope and all your trust is rested in this Jesus is that the place for you because that's what God wants that's what the almighty God says believe in him he's the one he's the one testament about the merchant looking for pearls and he found the best pearl that he could possibly imagine and he said that is so great

I need to sell everything else to get that pearl and I want to say Jesus is so great that he ought to be able to sell and just get me everything else in order to have him nothing is nothing should interfere with my having Jesus as the centre of my life of my life