

# Servant, Salvation and Steadfastness

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 09 April 2016

Preacher: Rev Hugh Ferrier

[ 0 : 01 ] Well, could you please turn with me to the passage we read in the prophecy of Isaiah 49. The prophecy of Isaiah 49. And looking again at verses 14 through to 16.

Isaiah 49 from verse 14. But Zion said, The Lord has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me. Can a woman forget her nursing child that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands. Your walls are continually before me.

The prophet Isaiah is writing to a people who are facing a political crisis. The Assyrians and the Babylonians have come and they are coming to invade and demolish the nations of Israel and Judah.

But Isaiah is also writing to people who are confronted with a spiritual crisis. Because they have turned their backs on the living God. And now it seems that he has turned his back on them.

[ 1 : 13 ] And so in Isaiah chapter 49, we see the Lord speaking about saving his people through a mysterious figure known simply as the servant of the Lord.

The message of Isaiah is a message of hope. A message of salvation. The message of Isaiah is a message of rescue and restoration and reconciliation and renewal in the ruins and the rubbish and the rubble of sin.

The message of Isaiah is a message of the triumph of God's grace in the midst of human failure. And so this evening I want us to focus on God's great, timeless, saving promises as we find them in Isaiah 49 verses 1 to 16.

And as we look at these promises, we'll see how gloriously they are fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus. And the confidence and the hope and the joy that they give us at a communion season. For those of you who may be taking notes, we're looking at the servant of the Lord. Then the salvation of the Lord. And finally, the steadfastness of the Lord.

[ 2 : 23 ] First we have the servant of the Lord in verses 1 to 7. And in these verses, Isaiah is given a glimpse of the servant, the Savior, the Lord has appointed for his people.

And right away, the servant is described as being divine. We read in verse 1 that the servant says, Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar.

The servant summons. He commands the whole earth to listen to him. And he commands and summons the earth to respond to him. The servant can speak as only God can speak to the world. The servant is divine. The servant is God. But then in verse 1, we also see that the servant is described as being human. We read, the Lord has called me from the womb, from the body of my mother.

He named my name. The servant is someone who is born. The servant is someone who is called from the womb. The servant is someone who is named. And so this servant is someone who is fully God, yes.

[ 3 : 33 ] But he is also fully man. This servant is the God man. But then in verse 2, the servant is described as being a prophet. His mouth is likened to a sharpened sword.

That is, what he says makes a powerful impact. And his words are likened to polished arrows. That is, they always hit their target. So here is a servant who is a true prophet, who speaks the true word of the true God with true power and true authority.

But then in verse 3, the servant is described as being God's revelation. He is called the Lord's servant Israel. Now you remember that the nation of Israel had been called by the Lord to be faithful to him.

They had been called to be a light to the nations. They had been called to shine forth the greatness of their God. But Israel failed in that God-given commission. This servant now is called to do what

Israel have failed to do.

He is called to be faithful to God. He is called to be a light to the nations. He is called to shine forth the greatness of the living God. He is called, quite simply, to be the true Israel.

[ 4 : 47 ] But not only that, we see that he is described as being the true Israel, through whom God would be glorified in verse 3. This servant will be the image of the invisible God.

This servant will be the very radiance of the glory of God. This servant will be the one in whom we see the grace of God, and the truth of God, and the beauty of God, and the splendor of God.

This servant, we might say, we see God's glory in his very face. But then in verse 4, the servant is described as being faithful. The servant is described as being despondent, and discouraged, and depressed, and distressed.

He says in verse 4, I have labored in vain. I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity. You see, the people look at this servant who is human.

This servant who is divine. This servant who is a prophet. This servant who is God's revelation.

They look at this servant, and they shrug their shoulders, and they say, so what?

[ 5 : 53 ] What's the big deal with this servant? And so the servant is despondent. He's discouraged. He's depressed. He is distressed when he sees how cold people are toward him, and the blessings that he is bringing and offering freely.

But instead of giving up and abandoning his mission, the servant remains faithful to God. Because in verse 4, he recognizes that everything is in the Lord's hands.

He recognizes that his reward is with the living God. He will endure adversity. He will accept opposition for the joy of God that is set before him.

The servant remains committed to God. He remains faithful to God even when it is difficult. The servant is able to say, My food is to do the will of him who sent me.

But then in verses 5 and 6, there is even more. Because the servant is described as being a savior.

The Lord, we're told in verse 5, has formed this servant in the womb.

[ 7 : 00 ] Why? To bring Jacob, to bring Israel back to himself. This servant is going to bridge the chasm between a holy God and a sinful people.

This servant is going to be the great mediator between God and man. But the Lord has not finished describing the servant's saving work. Because the Lord says in verse 6, that it is too small.

It is too light a thing for this servant to simply restore the tribes of Israel, restore the tribes of Jacob.

The Lord declares in verse 6, that this servant will be a light to whom?

To the nations, to the Gentiles, to the non-Jews. So the Lord declares that this servant is going to bring salvation. And he is not simply going to bring salvation to the Jews.

He is going to bring salvation to the ends of the earth. And then in verse 7, the servant is described as being vindicated. We're told in verse 7 that he is abhorred.

[ 8 : 04 ] And he is despised and he is rejected by the nation. And we're told in verse 7 that he is despised by the rulers. Those who could and those who should have known better.

He is rejected. But the story is not finished. The servant is not finished. Because we're told in verse 7 that kings and princes will see him.

And kings and princes, we're told, will worship him. Because the Lord has chosen to vindicate, to prove that this is his chosen servant. The Lord has chosen to declare that this is his vessel for his glory.

One day this servant who is despised and rejected will witness people coming from the ends of the earth. And they will come and they will bow down and they will declare him to be Lord to the glory of the living God.

So Isaiah here is given a glimpse, a prophetic foreshadowing of the servant, the Savior, the Lord has appointed for his people.

[ 9 : 14 ] And you know, friends, this is our Lord Jesus Christ. Because he is the one who is divine and summoned the whole earth into existence. And even now, even this evening, sustains all things by his powerful word.

He is the one who was born as a human child. Unable to do more than wriggle and scream and need fed and changed. And he is the one who was born as a true prophet.

And who spoke the true word of the true God with true power. And his word impressed people. And his word impacted upon people. Because you remember what the crowd said.

Here is one who teaches with authority. And not as our teachers of the law. And he is the one who is God's revelation of himself. And if you want this evening to see what God is like, where do you look?

You look to God. You look to Jesus. Because the words of Jesus are the words of God. And the deeds of Jesus are the deeds of God. In Jesus, we see the very glory of God in his face.

[10:23] But Jesus is also the one who was faithful. The servant who was faithful even to death and death on the cross. And was willing to say as he looked death in the face, Father, not my will be done, but thy will be done.

And Jesus is the one who brings salvation. Not to his own people. But to the ends of the earth. Not to the Jews only, but to the Gentiles. And this evening, friends, salvation is found in no other place. In no other person. In no other position. But the Lord Jesus Christ. And everyone who calls on his name will be saved. And if you are sitting here tonight and you are not a Christian.

And you are saying, what must I do to be saved? Must I go to the table? Must I go to the prayer meeting? Must I wear a hat? Must I wear a suit to church? Jesus says this. Believe in me.

And you will be saved. In him. In his name. There is salvation for the ends of the earth. And he is the one who will be vindicated.

[11:30] You see, he is the one. And we read about it in John. Who has risen triumphant from the grave. And the message of Easter heralds to us. That there is an empty tomb.

And that he is not here. He has risen. Just as he promised. And just as he said. And one day. Every knee is going to bow. And every tongue is going to confess.

That this Jesus is Lord. To the glory of God the Father. He will be vindicated. And so we might say tonight. That Jesus is God's true servant.

And all of God's promises of blessing. Are found in this Jesus. And this Jesus alone. And Sunday's communion service. Will primarily be our public acknowledgement.

And celebration. Of those truths. It will be our public acknowledgement. And celebration. Of who this Jesus is. God's servant. Our saviour.

[12:33] He will be the one lifted up in the psalms. He will be the one lifted up through the prayers. He will be the one lifted up through the readings. He will be the one lifted up in the preaching.

And he will be the one lifted up. Just as the elements are lifted up. This communion season. This communion season. Friends. Affords us the time and the place. To come and behold our saviour. This communion season. Affords us the time. The place. The space. To behold God's servant. The Lord Jesus Christ.

So that's the servant of the Lord. In verses 1 to 7. And this brings us second. To the salvation of the Lord. In verses 8 to 13. And in verses 8 to 13.

Isaiah is given a vision. Of the salvation. The Lord is working for his people. Isaiah is given a vision. Of the salvation. The Lord is working for his people. In verses 8 and 9.

[13:35] Isaiah hears about. A day of salvation. A time of favour. The Lord speaks to Isaiah. About a time of favour. When he will answer.

His people's plight. When he will respond. To his people's plight. And the Lord speaks about. A day of salvation. When he will help his people. In their plight.

And the Lord promises. In verses 8 to 9. That he is going to make his servant. A covenant. For his people. Now a covenant. At its most basic.

Is simply God's promise. Of blessing. And favour. And the Lord is promising. That through this servant. The land.

Will be restored. And the desolate. Inheritances. Will be reassigned. And the Lord is promising. That through this servant. The captives. Will come out. Of their imprisonment.

[14:31] And those in darkness. Will come out. Of their misery. This will be a time. Of salvation. It will be a day. Of salvation. But then in verses. 9 to 11.

Isaiah goes even further. To describe. This day of salvation. This time of favour. You see. The Lord promises. His people. That they will feed. And find pasture.

The Lord will be there. For them. He will be meeting them. Every step of the way. He will be providing. What they need. And the Lord promises. That his people. Will not hunger.

They will not thirst. Nor will the desert heat. Or sun beat upon them. Because the Lord. Will be there. Not only to provide. For them. But to protect them.

And then the Lord. Promises. In these verses. That his people. Will know. His gentle guidance. And his leading. Beside the springs. Of water. He even promises.

[15:26] To turn the mountains. Into roads. To make the way. Easier. For his people. To come to him. And for his people. To be with him. And he does all of this.

We're told in verse 10. Because he is compassionate. Because he pities them. And this little word. Compassion. Or pity.

In verse 10. Quite simply. Relates to a mother's. Love. For her child. The Lord. Is not simply going to. Provide for his people.

Nor will he simply. Protect his people. The Lord says. He will have pity. On. His people. And then in verses.

12 to 13. Isaiah calls for a response. To this day of salvation. This time of favor. Because here is the question. For us. How do you respond.

[16:22] To a God. Who provides for you. How do you respond. To a God. Who protects you. How do you respond. To a God. Who pities you.

Do you turn around. And shrug your shoulders. At such a God. Isaiah turns to us. As it were. And shouts. No way. Isaiah looks at people.

In verse 12. Coming from afar. To experience. The amazing grace of God. He says in verse 12.

That they come from the north. They come from the west. They come from the land of Saini.

And he calls on the nations. In verse 13. To shout for joy. And he calls on the earth. To rejoice. And he calls on the mountains. To burst into song.

Isaiah says. There is a God. Who comforts his people. There is a God. Who has compassion. On his afflicted ones. Don't regard him with indifference.

[17:20] Don't shrug your shoulders at him. Don't become bored with him. Isaiah says. Shout for joy. Rejoice. Burst into song.

When you are confronted. With this living God. So in verses. 8 through to 13. Isaiah is given a vision. Of the salvation.

The Lord is working for his people. Now tonight. Today. The apostle Paul tells us. That on account. Of Jesus reconciling work.

On the cross. And on account. Of his sin destroying. Devil defeating. Death conquering.

Resurrection. Paul says. Now is the time. Of God's favor.

Now. This very day. This very moment. This very hour. Is the time. Of God's favor. You see. We have a Jesus tonight.

[18:18] Who restores. The ruins. That sin. Has made of us. And we have a Jesus. Who brings us forward. Into a new way of life. With a new identity.

And we have a Jesus. Who cares for us. Moment by moment. And we have a Jesus. Who provides for us fully. As our good shepherd. And we have a Jesus. Who overcomes. Every obstacle.

Every mountain. Between us. And the living God. And we have a Jesus. Who will get us. All the way home. Into the eternal presence. Of God. And Jesus is the one.

Who is gathering his people. From afar. From the north. From the south. From the east. From the west. And there is room for anyone. Who will have him.

And tonight. We are called to respond. To this Jesus. We are called tonight. To shout for joy. We are called to rejoice.

[19:18] We are called to. Burst into song. In response to this Jesus. And Sunday's communion service. Where we eat the bread. And where we drink the wine.

Will be our public display. Our public profession. Of our shout for joy. Our rejoicing. Our bursting into song.

Sunday service. Will be our display. Of our response. Our response. To the salvation. That the living Christ. Has purchased for us. With his own blood.

Sunday's communion service. Friends. Is ultimately. Our commemoration. And celebration. Of a Jesus. Who provides for his people. Who protects his people.

Who pities his people. Who has pardoned his people. Sunday's communion service. Is ultimately our time. When we gather together. When we gather together. And say. It is not about what we have done for God.

[20:17] Or what we can do for God. Or what we hope to do for God. It is our public celebration. Of what God has done for us. In Christ. Christ. And the question.

That this passage. In these verses. Are putting to me. And to you. Is will we shout for joy. Will we rejoice. Will we burst into song.

As we participate. In that worship service. How do you respond. To the salvation of God. You receive it as a gift. And you praise him.

And thank him for the gift. This brings us finally. To the steadfastness of the Lord. And that's in verses 14 through to 16.

And in these verses. Isaiah is given a reassurance. Of the Lord's steadfast love for his people. Isaiah is given a reassurance. Of the Lord's steadfast love for his people.

[ 21 : 19 ] In verse 14. There is a painful question. But Zion said. The Lord has forsaken me. My Lord has forgotten me. Here's a massive let down.

The good news of the servant. And salvation. The gospel of the servant of the Lord. And salvation of the Lord. Fails to bring a smile. To the people Isaiah is addressing.

Here is a sour response. Here is a skeptical response. These people have heard God's. Massive promises of salvation. And they turn around. And they say. Ah but we don't feel loved.

The Lord has forsaken us. The Lord has abandoned us. How do we know the Lord loves us? The Lord has to prove it. To us. And maybe today.

There's things going on inside of you. That makes you find it hard. To believe that God loves you. And you're accepted by him. Or maybe tonight.

[ 22 : 18 ] There's things going on around you. That makes you find it hard. To believe that God loves you. And you're accepted by him. And so in verse 15. There is a verbal answer.

To this painful question. The Lord doesn't respond. To Israel's doubt. By saying. How dare you? How dare you doubt my love for you?

Not at all. In verse 15. The Lord encourages these people. To reflect on the bond. Between a nursing mother. And her child. And there may be nothing as strong.

As that bond of love. I look at my sister-in-law. Kirstie. And I see her consumed with love. For my nephew Ewan. And her social life.

And her work life. And her home life. And her leisure. And her hobbies. And her interests.

Everything takes place. To this little boy. Who at one moment. Could do little more. Than scream at her.

[ 23 : 13 ] And everything that she does. Is centered on him. And my brother said. It's amazing. That the smallest. Weakest member of the household. Is the center of attention. Within the household.

It is an amazing bond of love. But the Lord says in verse 15. That a mother will eventually. Forget her child. Now she may be a neglectful mother.

She may grow senile. There is nothing sadder. Than when you see a parent. Growing older. And their child goes to visit them. And they no longer remember. Who their child is.

And all mothers. Without exception. Eventually die. And the bond is broken. Between mother and child. But the Lord says here.

I will not forget you. A mother's unconditional love. Isn't indestructible. But God's unconditional love. Is indestructible. He is more fixed on his people.

[ 24 : 10 ] Than a mother is fixed on her child. And nothing can put a cork. In the fountain of God's love. For his children. It is a burning love. It is a passionate love.

It is an unwavering love. It is an unyielding love. It is a costly love. It is a sacrificial love. The Lord responds to his people's doubt. By saying.

I love you. And I am declaring my love. To you. To you. But then in verse 16. There is even more. Because we find.

Not simply a verbal answer. To the painful question. We find a concrete answer. To the painful question. Have you ever told someone.

That you love them. And they turn to you. And they say. It is just words. I want actions. I want proof. That you mean. What you say.

[ 25 : 04 ] When you say. That you love me. Well the Lord is anticipating. That kind of response. From his people. Where we might be inclined. To say. Well. I want God to prove.

That he loves me. I want him to do more. Than simply say. He loves me. I want him to show. That he loves me. And so the Lord says. In verse 16. Behold. I have engraved you.

On the palms of my hands. Your walls are continually. Before me. Now in the Old Testament. The name of a master. Might be tattooed. Onto the body.

Of his servant. But the name of the servant. Was never tattooed. Onto the body. Of the master. Now today. We see parents. Having their children's names. Tattooed onto their wrists. Or we see. Lovers tattooing. Their lovers names. On their necks. Or on their shoulders. Or on their chests. It's a sign of their unwavering. Unyielding love. [ 25 : 57 ] A sign that they will remember them always. It would be astounding to hear. The Lord therefore say. I have tattooed your names. Onto my palms.

But the Lord doesn't say. I have tattooed your names. Onto my palms. The Lord says. I have engraved. And the language in Hebrew. Indicates a hammer. Driving a spike. I have engraved. I have hammered. I have carved. I have cut your names. Into my palms. And because the Lord. Has cut his people's names. Into his palms. They are ever before him. He cannot forget them. He always. Always. Always. Loves them. He is always remembering them. And this love for them. And remembrance of them. Is seen in his willingness. To have nails. Driven through his palms. For them. So Isaiah is given a reassurance. [ 26 : 54 ] Of the Lord's steadfast love. For his people. Now friends. I want you to fast forward. 700 years. From when Isaiah is writing. And I want you to go back.

To the events of that very first Easter. And we see a disciple. Called Thomas. And Thomas sees. And he hears the resurrected Jesus. Say to him. Look at my hands. Look at my side. Don't doubt my love for you Thomas. Don't doubt my priestly work for you Thomas. Don't doubt my justification for you Thomas. Don't doubt my adoption of you Thomas. Don't doubt my death. And my resurrection for you Thomas. Don't doubt Thomas. Believe. And Jesus hands today. Are still scarred. And they will always be scarred. As a testimony to. His love for his people. [ 27 : 50 ] And his great remembrance. Of his people. The Bible speaks today. Of a God. A Jesus. Who loves his people. And his love for his people.

Is more than mere words. It moves him to action. It moves him to a cross. It moves him to the place. Where the apostle Paul. Would write. The son of God. Loved me. And he gave himself. For me. And Sunday's communion service. Is our remembering. And rejoicing. In the son of God's love. For us. As we take the bread. We remember the body of Christ. Broken in love. For us. And as we take the wine. We remember the blood of Christ. Shed in love. For us. And when we look at those physical elements. When we look at the bread. And the wine. And are reminded. [ 28 : 44 ] Of that historical event. At Calvary. 2,000 years ago. 700 years on. From when Isaiah is writing. We are beholding. The heralding. Of God's eternal.

Love. For his people. It is love. On display. Love. In an image. Love. In wine. And bread. Do you know this God today? Are you able to know. And rejoice. In his love. For you. Today. I don't know what any of you. Have been through this week. Maybe some of you. Have been encouraged this week. And your heart. Has been gladdened. And you're so excited. About this communion service. But maybe for some of you. It's been a very hard week. And you would never have chosen. Those circumstances. And providences. For yourself. If you had had it. Your way. If you had known. Last Sunday. What you would have gone through. By this Sunday. [ 29 : 41 ] You would have turned to the Lord. And said. No Lord. I'm not strong enough. And I don't want you. To put me through that. Well.

Whether you have been through. Pleasure or pain. This week. I want you to look. At this Jesus. And I want you. To look at his. Engraved palms. That were engraved. For his people. And believe. In the love of God. For you. Amen. And may God bless. These thoughts.