Redemption from God

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[0:00] So I want to begin this morning by imagining as a filmmaker, redoing the story of the prodigal son. You all know, hopefully, the prodigal son, the son who was given half of the inheritance by his father upon his demand, and he runs off and he goes far away from his father and he spends it all, and he finds himself in this crisis point.

He's lost all of his money, he's far from home, he's fighting with the pigs in the pigsty for the food. He's buried the most dishonorable place that a Jewish boy could ever find himself.
And he thinks of his father. And as a filmmaker, I want you to sort of hone in on this because the Bible passage goes on and it says, he imagines his return and he would say to his father, Father, I've sinned against heaven and before you, I'm no longer worthy to be called your son, treat me as your hired servant.
But I wonder if in a filmmaking, they might pause there and maybe he might sit there and think, would my father even receive me?
Can I ever go home even as a servant? Somehow as a filmmaker, we'd want to think, how do we capture his fear?
[1:16] That as he walked up to the door, the father might turn his face away, shut the door with a stone face. The message is you had your chance, you blew it, you are dead to me.

Have you ever felt like that with God? God, you know you're not perfect. In fact, you've blown it. Your life bears the scars and the stories of how black your heart is and how destructive your actions have been.
You know that everything you touch has been stained and marred. And you realize that everything you've been a part of, not only your life, but every group, every institution, every people that you've been a part of, has been stained in the same way.
And as you look at the world through this lens, despair creeps in. If God sees what I see, if God knows what I know about myself and the people that I am with, would He ever welcome us back? Would He ever redeem us? Or are we in fact beyond repair, beyond the reach of even His help? Is there hope for an irredeemable people?
[2:51] This, I believe, is the question that the prophet Isaiah is speaking to in the passage that we're going to look at this morning. We are in a summer series on the book of Isaiah, chapters 40 through 55.

If you want to turn with me in the Pew Bible, it'd be good for you to follow along if you can. It's page 564. We're going to start in Isaiah 42, verse 18.
And we'll look through chapter 43, verse 21. So we're looking at a big chunk. We're going to look at it in sections, so we're not going to read it all up front. We're going to look at it piecemeal along the way.
And what we want to remember is that Isaiah has been writing. Remember the first word in chapter 40, comfort. Comfort my people. Isaiah is writing to a people, giving them a word of hope.
A word of hope that, in fact, God may redeem His people. So with that, let's pray, and then we'll look at the passage together. Lord, we pray this morning as we look at Your Word.
[3:55] We pray for Your help. Lord, for we know that we are, Lord, hard-hearted and hard-headed sometimes. We are not easy to teach. And Lord, we often misunderstand You.

Lord, I pray for Your help by Your Spirit this morning, that we together would sit under Your Word, that You would speak to us. Lord, that You would convict our hearts, Lord, both of the depth of our sin and also the greatness of the hope that we have in You.
Lord, I pray for Your help, that You would help me to speak clearly. Lord, and that You would do good work in all of our hearts this morning. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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As we walk through this text this morning, for those of you who are taking outlines, here it is. We're going to look at the people that God redeems. We're going to look at the way that God redeems. And then we're going to look at the response of God's redeemed.
So, the people that God redeems is what we see at the end of Isaiah chapter 42. So, let's read those verses together. Isaiah 42, starting in verse 18.
[5:09] Hear, you deaf, and look, you blind, that you may see. Who is blind but My servant? Or deaf as My messenger whom I send?

Who is blind as My dedicated one? Or blind as the servant of the Lord? He sees many things, but does not observe them. His ears are open, but He does not hear.
The Lord was pleased for His righteousness' sake to magnify His law and make it glorious. But this is a people plundered and looted. They are all of them trapped in holes and hidden in prisons. They have become plunder with none to rescue, spoil with none to say restore. Who among you will give ear to this? Who will attend and listen for the time to come?
Who gave up Jacob to the looter and Israel to the plunderers? Was it not the Lord? Against whom we have sinned, in whose ways they would not walk and whose law they would not obey.
[6:17] So, He poured on Him the heat of His anchor and the might of battle. It set Him on fire all around, but He did not understand. It burned Him up, but He did not take it to heart.

So, in this passage, Isaiah is turning his attention towards the people of Israel, the people who God is redeeming, and He describes them in a very unflattering picture.
Right? As we walk through this, what does He say about the people God redeems? Well, in verses 19 and 20, it says, they are blind and deaf. He starts with verse 18.
He's calling… In verse 18, He's calling the nations, hey, come, come nations. Come and look and see what Israel has done. You who are blind and deaf because you don't know us, come and see Israel.
But you know what you're going to see when you look at them? They're no different than you. They too are blind and deaf. They are no longer able or willing to hear your voice, to hear God's voice, to see God's hand.
[7:28] And if you've been here for a couple of weeks, you might be confused because in this passage, He describes Israel, this blind and deaf, this disobedient people, as my servant.

And if you were here last week, you remember Nick preached in the beginning of chapter 42 that my servant seemed like the great hope of Israel. And here we see the servant is the great failure of Israel.
So how do we understand this? Well, here's the picture. God here is speaking of Israel as a nation, as His covenant people. You are my servant because I've called you to be my people and to serve me in the world.
But you have failed and you will continue to fail. And so you need a greater servant. You need one who's going to come later. You need the servant of the beginning of chapter 1 verses… Or the beginning of chapter 42 verses 1 through 7.
A servant who really will obey, who really will bring justice, who really will live out righteousness. And so there's this contrast in Isaiah and there are two different servants.
[8:31] And whenever you see that word, you'll want to spend some time discerning which one is being referred to in this place. What is the connotation of servant in each of these contexts?

So, as we're reading with Isaiah, there's your little Bible study note for the week. What Isaiah is focusing on here at the end of chapter 42 is that Isaiah… That God's people Israel are disobedient. They are blind and deaf. And there in verses 21 and 22 it says, you are supposed to hear. You are supposed to hear God's law and then live it out in a way to display God's glory to the world.
But instead you turned away. Rather than being the glory of God, they have suffered under the judgment of God.
And they're scattered with no one to rescue them. That's what the nations see because Israel is scattered. And this is what we see in verses 23 through 25 as well.
[9:35] Because not only has God judged His people, but they continue in their unrepentant hearts. And for those of you who are new here and if you've forgotten the history, part of what's happening here is Isaiah's preaching in the early 600 B.C.

So, what has happened is the northern kingdom has already fallen to a nation called Assyria because of their disobedience to the Lord. So, the southern kingdom that Isaiah is preaching to has

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seen that.
And then Isaiah here in this section is looking ahead to a second conquering of God's people when the nation of Babylon is going to come and ruin Jerusalem and take people away into captivity. It's called the exile. And so, he's preaching ahead to those people who have seen the final destruction of the nation of Israel, of the capital Jerusalem, of the temple being destroyed. They've all been taken away. And Isaiah is saying, My people did not understand. They did not take it to heart. Even when they saw my disciplining hand, they did not respond.
[10:46] And they will go into exile and they will be scattered. Can you imagine what it would be like to be that Israelite in exile?

Maybe they too felt, We've sinned too badly against the Lord and He has abandoned us. We've blown it one too many times. The Lord who has been so faithful to us and received us over and over again through our failure.
Israel has fallen. Maybe they feared that God could not restore. Now, before we move on to the next section, I want to stop and think.
Look, as we think about applying this passage to us today, it's easy for us to think about our own personal failure and our own personal sin. Actually, Nick's going to preach on that with a lot of clarity next week.
So, come back next week because it'll be great. But the focus here is actually on the nation and God not being able to restore the nation. And we know in the New Testament, we know from the progress of biblical teaching that when Jesus comes, the people of God become something different.
[11:57] They're no longer a nation with a political identity and physical boundaries. But it becomes, in fact, the church. But maybe you look at the church and you think, can God redeem this?

That's a real question, isn't it? We're a part of the Southern Baptist Church. And the Southern Baptist Church has a convention this week that will have a reckoning for its failure to be what God called it to be.
And it's grievous and it's heartbreaking. And we pray that God will do good in this convention and move forward with righteousness and with justice and with humility and with brokenheartedness. But it might not. Because we know the church continues to fail and continues to not do these things well. What will God do with a church that continues to turn away?
What will God do with a church that, in its arrogance and glib presumption, disregards God's Word? Who builds institutions at the sake of His glory?
[13:13] What will God do with us? Can God redeem a people to Himself? Can He redeem His church? Well, Isaiah goes on.

And just as he spoke words of hope to those Israelites in exile, he speaks words of hope to us today. Chapter 43 begins with the word, But now, though it looks so bleak, but now there is a greater word that I have for you.
So let's read this. We'll start with verse 143, verses 1 through 7. But now, what will it look like for God to redeem His people?
Let's read this together. But now, thus says the Lord, For I am the Lord, For I am the Lord your God. Fear not, for I have redeemed you.
I have called you by name. You are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. And through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you.
[14:16] When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned. And the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you, because you are precious in my eyes and honored. And I love you.
I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life. Fear not, for I am with you. I will bring your offspring from the east.
And from the west, I will gather you. I will say to the north, give up. And to the south, do not withhold. Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.
In this first section of chapter 43, we see the first thing about the way that God will redeem his people. And the overwhelming emphasis here is that God will do it personally.

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[15:23] Secondly, I will be with you, for I have called you to be mine and I am your God. I am the one who formed you like a creator.

I knit you together. I know everything about you. There's nothing hidden and I have made you and called you to be mine. Your creator has not abandoned you. And he says, called you by name.
I have called you into a covenant relationship with me. Like a marriage, I have said, I will be yours and you will be mine forever. And this is the picture that he says, I formed you to be this people.
And even in your unfaithfulness, my covenant will not fail. My faithfulness will not waver. I will not fall away. We see in verse four, the heart of this personal God for his people.
He says, you are precious in my sight and honored and I love you. And friends, remember that from the very beginning, way back in the book of Deuteronomy, as God was calling his people out of Egypt and out of Israel, he reminded them, I didn't call you because you were so special.
[16:33] I didn't call you because you were lovely or because you were strong or because you were big or because you were particularly righteous. I set my love on you because of my choice has nothing to do with your worth or ability to earn or to deserve what I'm giving to you.

Prophet Zephaniah will say later that God delights in his people, that he sings over them with joy. This is the heart of God. And Isaiah is reminding us that this is the kind of love that God has for his people.
that drives his determination to redeem his people. Israel felt like trash. They felt like they had been discarded.
They were out of their home, out of their place of worship, away from the temple where God dwelt. They were, remember the description, they were hiding in holes. They were in prisons. They were all, they were scattered and broken.
And Isaiah speaks these words of hope. God sees you as precious. And the center of this section is verse 3. I am your God.
[17:48] Though you feel cast out and captive by others, I have not abandoned you and I will come for you and I will restore you. Isaiah goes on in verses 8 through 20.

Not only is God's redemption personal in this way, but it is powerful. Let's read verses 8 through 20 together to see how he describes this. Bring out the people who are blind, yet have eyes, who are deaf, yet have ears.
All the nations gather together and the peoples assemble. Who among them can declare this and show us the former things? Let them bring their witnesses to prove them right.
And let them hear and say, it is true. You are my witnesses, declares the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he.
Beside me no God was formed, nor shall there be any after me. I, I am the Lord, and beside me there is no Savior.
[19:01] I declared and saved and proclaimed. When there was no strange God among you, and you are my witnesses, declares the Lord, and I am God.

And henceforth I am he, and there is none who can deliver from my hand. I work, and who can turn it back? Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.
For your sake I send to Babylon and bring them all down as fugitives, even the Chaldeans in the ships in which they rejoice. I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.
Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings forth chariot and horse, army and warrior. They lie down, they cannot rise. They are extinguished and quenched like a wick.
Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing. Now it springs forth. Do you not perceive it?
[20:02] I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The wild beasts will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches. For I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself, that they might declare my praise.

So there's a lot in this section for us to look at. But I want to give you just a little bit of an outline of how God is saying, I have the power to save.
Right? He's already referred to it, some of it in verses 1 through 7 where he says, you will pass through fire and you will pass through water, but you will not be destroyed by them. Right?
Fire and water in the ancient world were pictures of chaos. There were uncontrollable forces that would simply overwhelm and bring destruction. And he says, my power will preserve you through

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these great trials.
He also says, my power is great enough to reach even to the ends of the earth. Did you hear that? Where he says, I will call my people from the north and the south and the east and the west. I will call my people to myself from everywhere.
[21:15] There's nowhere where you can go. Nowhere is too far off for me to not be able to bring you back. And then in verses 8 through 10, what he basically says is, okay, witnesses, come and see.

Come and see what I'm doing. Right? You who serve other gods, have your gods told what is going to happen in the future? Have your gods been able to explain what has happened in the past? No, none of you have done this. He says, I alone am the one who is able to redeem you. And then verses 14 and 15, he gets to the nub of the point that he wants the Israelites to hear while they're in exile.
Verses 14 and 15 are a promise. I will break the Babylonian exile. I will sweep over them with a new power. And we know in just a few verses or just a few chapters that it's going to come at the hand of the nation of Persia and the person of Cyrus who's going to take over the Babylonian empire.
And the Chaldeans are just a part of the Babylonian empire if you're wondering who they are. And so he brings them together. And he's saying to Israel, the power that seems to control your life right now, they'll be gone like that.
[22:33] By my hand, I will use other nations to destroy them. In fact, I will send them into exile. They will be like fugitives, just like you are now.

And this is the power that I am promising that I have to redeem you. And then he goes on to remind them in verses 16 and 17 of his past deliverance.
Do you remember what I did in Egypt? How I delivered a people forgotten, forsaken, and broken, enslaved by another nation. I came and I rescued them with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.
How I reached in and rescued them from the strong nation of Egypt. How I brought them through the fire and through the waters. How I delivered them through the Red Sea.
How I destroyed the armies of the Egyptians. The chariots were thrown into the sea. All of them were defeated. So remember in my past what I have done to redeem my people.
[23:37] And now, then in verses 18 through 20, he's saying, and now I'm doing a new thing. As I am going to redeem my people now, I am going to do something new.

And it's not going to be out of character with what I've already done. It's going to be a greater redemption than you've ever seen before. The exodus, that's great. The return from exile, awesome.
But what I have for you is something even better. Like streams in the desert, I will bring a redemption. That will be greater than you can imagine.
And so, 1 Peter writes that we were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from our forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.
He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in the last time for the sake of you, who through him are believers in God.
[24:46] God who raised Jesus from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. Friends, this is the new thing that Isaiah is looking at.

And we'll see it later in this section. And we'll see it so clearly in chapters 52 and 53, that Isaiah has in mind this salvation and this redemption that is to come.
That at the very cost of the life of the Son of God, God will show his love for his people and his determination, his commitment, his faithfulness to his promise to redeem a people for himself.
Not just from the Jewish people, but from every tongue and tribe and nation, from the corners of the earth, God will be calling a people to himself. And so Jesus promises that he will build his church, and the gates of hell will not stand against it.
So he says that he promises us that he who began a good work in us will bring it to completion in the day of Christ Jesus, that he will continue to call and save and redeem.
[25:51] And I wonder if you are here this morning, and if you've lost sight of that hope. Maybe you thought you're too far gone for God to redeem you.

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Maybe you're here exploring Christianity and you're wondering, does God even want me? You've wandered from the church that you grew up in, and you wonder if the Father will embrace you. Isaiah says, the God of Israel, the God of the Bible, is a God who redeems people just like that. Come home. Turn to him and find this great hope. Friends, this is where I want to close with just a few practical applications.

The end of verse 21 captured me as I looked at this whole verse, at this whole section, because at the end of 43, verse 21, he says, the people whom I formed for myself, that they might declare my praise.

[27:01] How do we respond to being God's redeemed people? What does this mean for us? Quickly, one, it should make us a humble people. The church should never be an arrogant people who look down on others because they are different or because they believe in us.

We are broken people who know that we don't deserve any of this, that God has invited us in because of His mercy and His grace. And if we live in this, we will be humble before God and before this world.

So let us remember that we have nothing to commend ourselves, but that God brings us to Himself because of His amazing love. Let us go back and like those wandering in the desert who find an oasis, not think, what a great oasis I have built, but simply drink and be thankful.

Secondly, it should make us a people who bear witness. Friends, if God has saved us, let us declare Him to the world. Just like we might share the great news of a car we bought or an app that we found or a recipe that we want to share with others, let us share things much greater than that, that we know a God who redeems even the most far-gone people.

Let us do it with joy and humility. Let us do it with awe of the God who had set His love on anyone at all. Let us speak of Jesus who came so that we might know and be restored to God.

[28:50] And finally, knowing this God, a God who redeems us, may it make us a people who are full of praise. Praise to Him.

We live in a world where much is wrong. Let us spend time praising what is right. It's okay to point out what's wrong, but maybe we need to spend more time simply praising what is right.

We need to lift our eyes from our daily burdens and trials that so often overwhelm us. We need to lift our eyes up and to see this God, the Holy One of Israel, our Redeemer, our Savior, who calls us precious and says, I love you.

Let us do it practically. Isaiah says, let us sing. Sing. That's not just an idea. Really, do it. Do it in your car on your way to work.

Do it with your family around the dinner table. Do it with your small group. Do it as you come and gather with God's people regularly. Practice praising God in song.

[30:04] And then be creative and do all the other ways that you can praise Him in art and in words and in journaling and all the other ways you can do it. But let's not forsake praising God in public and in private so that our hearts may be reminded over and over again of the Redeemer's love for us.

Let's pray. Oh Lord, your love is so amazing to us and we have such a great salvation.

Lord, today by your Spirit renew in us a joy of knowing you. And Lord, if there's some here this morning, will you pierce through the fear and the hardness of hearts that believe are too far gone? Will you envelop them with your grace? Embrace them with your love that they may turn to you and be saved. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[31:32] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. A watts are too far in es emphasized. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Ahora, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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