

Isaiah 42:1-9

This week we are jumping into a powerful prophecy from Isaiah spoken into the life of the people of God in a time of exile.

What did you learn or feel challenged by in Sunday's sermon?

The Ministry of the Servant

Isaiah's words are spoken to the people of God who are in exile in Babylon. Under foreign rule, in a foreign land, separated from their temple there would be big temptations to either fall into despair or succumb to cultural and religious assimilation.

- How is situation of the people of God somewhat similar to our modern one? (to despair in the face of our modern ungodly culture or to succumb to taking on the same beliefs and practices)
- How might Isaiah's prophecy here bring hope? How might it remind them to stay true to their God and trust in his good plans for them?

God's prophets are always vocal in speaking against idols. Read Isaiah 41:21-29 in light of 42:1. What is different about the Servant compared to the idols of Babylon?

What do you notice about the way the Servant will go about fulfilling his mission (v2-4)? Why would the Servant go about his mission this way as opposed to enforcing justice or visiting violence on the perpetrators of injustice?

Sometimes Isaiah refers to the people of God being his 'servant' (eg Isaiah 41:8-16), yet Isaiah 42:1-9 seems to depict one figure, someone who would be the ideal representative of Israel and God's chosen instrument of bringing forth justice.

- Read Matthew 12:15-21 and 3:16-17 and consider: how does Jesus fulfil the character and calling of the Servant?

Although Isaiah is prophesying to God's chosen people, what is the scope of the Servant's ministry? Who will be the ones who benefit from his ministry?

Justice seems to be a key concern in verses 1-4. Yet we are all too familiar with the rampant injustice all around our world today.

- What evidence can you point to that demonstrates how Jesus has already brought justice to our world?
- In what ways is this justice-bringing incomplete?
- How would you explain to a non-believer how Jesus will finally establish justice once and for all?

God's Approval of the Servant

The second half of this passage speaks of God's affirmation of his Servant with strong statements about God's power and character. What are God's actions in these verses?

What do these verses reveal about our God?

What are some of the ministries that God will accomplish through the Servant in these verses? Can you think of Gospel stories where Jesus fulfilled these prophecies?

Our Response to the Servant

Jesus perfectly fulfils the role and ministry of God's Servant through his life, death and resurrection. In the same way that Isaiah can refer to Israel as God's servant, so too are we also God's servants in this world.

- What does the ministry of the Servant mean for the way we live and work towards justice in our world today?