

Here is your God! (Isaiah 40:1-11 & Luke 2:22-40) 30-Dec-18

G'day church family

Okay we're looking at Isaiah chapter 40 (first 11 verses) and then Luke chapter 2 (from verse 22 to 40)

There's the usual outline in the bulletin - to jot down notes - if you wish.

Let me pray for God's understanding. Let's pray...

Intro

If you think about it

We spend a lot of time waiting in our lives - don't we?

[PowerPoint 1-waiting for family]

Waiting for our family to get ready

[PowerPoint 2-waiting in traffic jams]

Waiting in traffic jams

[PowerPoint 3-waiting microwave]

Waiting for the microwave to finish - when we're hungry

[PowerPoint 4-waiting on the phone]

Or waiting on the phone - for Centrelink, or Telstra and so on...

Context/God will come! (Isaiah 40:1-11)

[PowerPoint 5-Context]

And the context of both of our readings today is WAITING

As we heard last Sunday and on Christmas Day

The prophet Isaiah (about 700-800 before Jesus)

Prophet Isaiah has been telling the people of Israel - that God will act and send someone to rescue them from their sin and rebellion against God

In fact, the whole of the OT could be summarized simply - *Jesus the Saviour is needed because of people's sin! Wait! Jesus is coming!*

And in our OT passage from Isaiah chapter 40

Isaiah speaks words of comfort to the people -see v1

Their hard service of exile is over

Their sins will be paid for - see v2

Before God acts though - in V3

Someone will come before that - and he will be a voice crying in the wilderness

And this someone will prepare people to meet the Lord - and tell people to get ready to meet the Lord - and to remove every obstacle from their lives that might prevent them from meeting the Lord

That someone is John the Baptist - born just a few months before Jesus

And Isaiah says in V5 - God's glory will be revealed

And God's glory is revealed when Jesus - the Son of God - the Promised Messiah - is finally born - the waiting is over!

Isaiah has more to say about this coming Saviour though

In verses 7 & 8 - He describes human beings as being like grass and flowers - which wither and fall in season - that is just like grass and flowers are temporary so are humans - but in comparison to the temporary existence of humans - the word of God endures forever!

Now remember the Word of God - is Jesus (John 1:14) - so Jesus - the Word of God lives forever!

God's word endures forever!

By way of illustration:

In 303 A.D., the Roman Emperor Diocletian demanded that every copy of the Scriptures in the Roman Empire be burned. He wanted to get rid of God's Word but he failed because God's is in control and His word endures forever. So, 25 years later, the Roman Emperor Constantine commissioned a scholar named Eusebius to prepare 50 copies of the Bible at government expense.

God's word endures forever!

Back to Isaiah...

And the good news that Isaiah wants the people to hear

Is that God is not sending an ordinary human being

But see v9 - It's God Himself who's coming

You who bring good news to Jerusalem,

lift up your voice with a shout,

lift it up, do not be afraid;

say to the towns of Judah,
 "Here is your God!"

God Himself will step into human history in the form of baby Jesus

And what's God going to do?

V10 - says the Lord comes with power and rules with a mighty arm

And the Lord - has His *reward and recompense* with Him

His *reward* - is forgiveness and eternal life

His *recompense* - is He Himself make amends for sin - by this baby Jesus

growing up to die on a cross for the punishment of sin to be taken away from us

- and put on Him - so we can go free and have forgiveness for our sins

And Isaiah says - this coming saviour

In verse 11 - is going to be like a shepherd gathering His lambs - His people - in

His arms and close to His heart -

All this points to Jesus - the Good Shepherd coming to gather His sheep.

Jesus - the one who is God's Word - in human form - but also fully God

A gift of God...for humankind

The Gift of God (Luke 2:21-24)

[PowerPoint 6-Gift]

Which brings us to our NT passage from Luke 2 - verse 21 onwards [Please turn there]

After Jesus' birth!

3 ancient ceremonies need to take place - all to do with Jesus' birth

1. First - Circumcision - eight days after birth - all baby boys have to be circumcised - at this ceremony - which could even be done on the Sabbath - the baby boy is also given his name - in this case - JESUS - the Saviour - see v21
2. Second - Redemption of the First Born - according to Ex 13:2 - every first-born child - belonged to God. But parents could buy back - redeem their child - as it were - for the sum of 5 shekels of silver - see Num 18:16
3. Third - Purification after childbirth - Lev 12 stated - after childbirth a woman was unclean for 40 days after the birth of a boy and unclean for 80 days after the birth of a girl - at the end of the time of cleansing - a sacrifice had to be made by offering a lamb and a pigeon. If a couple couldn't afford that - the offering could be 2 doves or 2 pigeons - known as the *Offering of the Poor* - see v24.

Mary and Joseph could only afford the offering of the poor. Jesus was born into an ordinary home with no luxuries - into a family who knew the difficulties of making ends meet.

These 3 ceremonies acknowledge that every child is a precious gift from God. And this particular baby - Jesus - is especially precious - because of who He is - fully God and fully human - and perfect and sinless - and able to save people from sin and death!

Responses to the Gift of God (Luke 2:25-40)

How will people respond to God's gift - in Jesus?

Simeon (vv25- 35)

By the time Jesus is born

The people have been waiting since before Isaiah's day for God to send His promised Messiah - they've been waiting over 800 years

And there has been 400 years of silence - from the time of the last prophet in the OT - Malachi - there's been a gap of 400 years - until Jesus' birth - and there's been no messengers or prophets from God - just waiting!

When Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the temple to consecrate Him (dedicate Him to God)

[PowerPoint 7-Simeon]

They come across a man named Simeon - a righteous and devout man - and the HS had revealed to Simeon - that he wouldn't die before He'd seen God's saviour Messiah - and the HS led him in the direction of Mary and Joseph and baby Jesus - in the temple courts.

Holding baby Jesus in his arms - Simeon gives a summary of Jesus' life

See v32

He will be a light to **Gentiles** - not just Jews - from this we see that God's plan is to come and rescue all people from their sin - not just the Jewish nation of Israel. Jesus will be a light that exposes the darkness of sin in this world and that invites people to come out of the darkness of their sin into His glorious light

See v34

Jesus will **cause many to fall** - what he means is many will hear the message of Jesus - but many will reject Jesus' message and will be condemned for this rejection

And Jesus will also **cause many to rise** - this is a picture of the hand of Jesus pulling people out of the pit of their sin - and giving them a hand up - helping them to rise up out of the pit of despair and be forgiven. And ultimately people's faith in Jesus - will cause them to rise from death - even when they die - they will still live - and live forever with God

And Jesus will also **be spoken against** - there will be much opposition to Jesus' teaching in His life time - and there's that same opposition to Jesus' teach - even today.

Jesus doesn't leave the option to be neutral about His teaching though - we either surrender to His teaching - or we oppose it. Often, it's a person's pride that prevents them from surrendering to Jesus' teaching - a teaching that leads to victory over sin and death

Simeon also tells Mary - v35 - that her soul will be pierced like being stabbed with a sword - Simeon's clearly referring to the effect it will be on Mary - having to witness what will happen to Jesus - when He is cruelly tortured and crucified

Anna (vv36-38)

[PowerPoint 8-Anna]

Besides Simeon, there's another witness, in the Temple, to the coming Lord.

Anna!

Anna's name means *grace* and she witnesses God's grace (God's gift) She is 84 years old, a prophet, a widow after only 7 years of marriage. However, her misfortune didn't make her bitter though - instead she is devoted to God - she is always at the temple - worshipping day and night - and fasting and praying She too - knows who Jesus is - and gives thanks to God - and speaks about the child born - to all who were waiting for Jerusalem to be bought back to God!

What can we learn from the characters in this passage today?

Application

[PowerPoint 9a-App1]

1. Mary and Joseph did everything according to God's Word - they followed God's Word and dedicated the child and gave thanks to God. Do we do everything according to God's Word? Following His commandments - loving Him? Loving others? Are we as committed and devoted to God's Word, as Mary and Joseph were?

(pause)

[PowerPoint 9b-App 2]

2. Simeon waited on God and knew what He was waiting for. He trusted in God's promise and he knew God would keep His promise. Simeon waited patiently on the Lord. In the same way - we are waiting for Jesus' 2nd coming - we don't know when - but we are told in the NT to eagerly await His coming (Rom 8:23-25; 1 Cor 1:7; 4:5; 1 Thess 1:10; Titus 2:13). If we live our lives knowing Jesus could come today or tomorrow - it will cause us to live with the right priorities. It will cause us to do things that will matter for eternity [like

enabling people to believe in Jesus and helping people growing in their faith], rather than just for the next week. And it should also cause us to witness about Jesus - just as Simeon did

(pause)

[PowerPoint 9c-App 3]

3. From Anna - we can learn how to be a healthy Christian - one who worships God day and night - not just one day a week. One who is constantly in prayer. She was a prayer warrior. What or who are we praying for? Are we praying for our family, our church family, ministries within our church, for the sick, the lonely, the disadvantaged? Are we praying for those who don't know Jesus - and that Jesus would come into their hearts? Anna also told everyone about this baby Jesus - are we doing that?

(pause)

[PowerPoint 9d-App 4]

4. In today's culture - sometimes younger people think that older people have nothing to teach them - and sometimes older people believe it! And on the flip side; sometimes older people know they have a lot they could teach and pass on to the younger ones - but they'd rather spend their retirement years in leisure and recreation.

Both these views are wrong - The Bible says that those who are younger should learn from those who are older (Titus 2)

There's no such thing as retirement from being a Christian - Simeon and Anna didn't retire from their faith. The years we have spent working in the work force - may well be God preparing us for work in ministry here at St. David's?

What skills, what lessons, what truths have we learned that we can pass on to the next generation? How can we encourage? How can we help? How can we minister to the needs of others? How can we serve God?

In Simeon and Anna - here are two people near the end of their life, still serving God full steam ahead

So how open are we are to serving God and sharing Him with others.

Even though death might be imminent for Simeon and Anna, they have found the meaning of life, and what makes life significant. They did not wait around for the next vacation, or the next toy, or the next adventure. No, they waited for Jesus Christ, and as they waited, they served God in any and every way they could.

What are we waiting for? I pray we are waiting for Jesus Christ. And as we do, I pray we are wisely using the time and abilities and talents God has given us. Life has meaning when we spend it waiting for Jesus.

Because in Jesus - as the prophet Isaiah says - *Here is our God!*

Let's pray...