

Sunday 26-Dec-21

A Light for the World

Isaiah 49:1-7

The Servant of the LORD

49 Listen to me, you islands;

hear this, you distant nations:

Before I was born the LORD called me;

from my mother's womb he has spoken my name.

2 He made my mouth like a sharpened sword,

in the shadow of his hand he hid me;

he made me into a polished arrow

and concealed me in his quiver.

3 He said to me, "You are my servant,

Israel, in whom I will display my splendour."

4 But I said, "I have laboured in vain;

I have spent my strength for nothing at all.

Yet what is due me is in the LORD's hand,

and my reward is with my God."

5 And now the LORD says—

he who formed me in the womb to be his servant

to bring Jacob back to him

and gather Israel to himself,

for I am honoured in the eyes of the LORD

and my God has been my strength—

6 he says:

"It is too small a thing for you to be my servant

to restore the tribes of Jacob

and bring back those of Israel I have kept.

I will also make you a light for the Gentiles,

that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."

7 This is what the LORD says—

the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel—

to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation,
to the servant of rulers:
“Kings will see you and stand up,
princes will see and bow down,
because of the LORD, who is faithful,
the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”

Luke 2:22-40

Jesus Presented in the Temple

²² When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

²⁹ “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.”

³³ The child’s father and mother marvelled at what was said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child

is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, ³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. ³⁸ Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹ When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰ And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

Sermon: A Light for the World

Please have your **Bibles opened** up at **Isaiah chapter 49** –to begin with.

Let me pray for God’s guidance and understanding

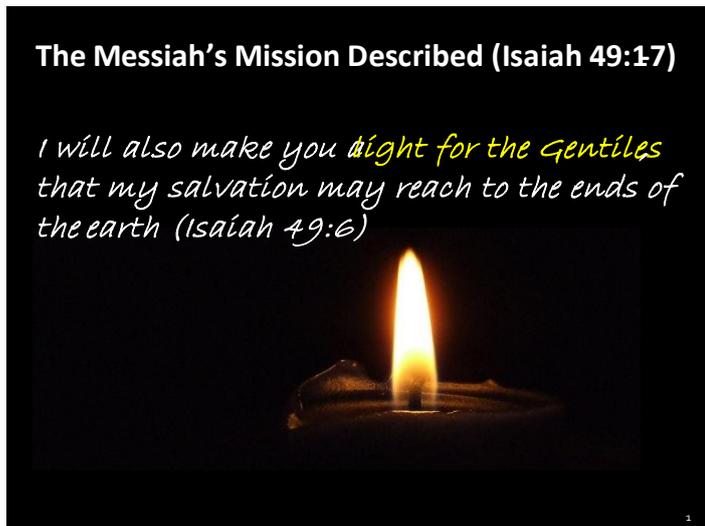
Let’s pray...

Context

- On Christmas Day we saw how the prophet **Isaiah** had **foretold the birth of Jesus the Messiah– 700 years** or more before it actually happened
- And we saw how **Isaiah described** what Jesus the **Messiah** would be **like**
- That He would be a **Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father** and **Prince of Peace**
- And we saw how **Jesus** was **born of virgin** called Mary – and placed in a **manger**

- And we saw how an **angel appeared** to some **shepherds** and told them that **Jesus would be** a **Saviour** for His people – by **saving people** from the punishment of their sin and rebellion against God
- And we left **Mary pondering in her heart** what her son's birth meant
- In today's Old Testament Bible **reading** – we **again** turn to **Isaiah** for another prophecy about Jesus the Messiah – and **we discover** what the **Messiah's mission will be**
- So, if we turn to Isaiah chapter 49 – we see that it's the **Messiah Himself speaking** – and He **describes His Mission**

[PowerPoint 1-Mission Described]



The Messiah's Mission Described (Isaiah 49:1-7)

- We pick up the story in verse 1 – where the **Messiah tells the islands and distant nations to listen**
- These **islands and distant nations** are actually the surrounding non-Jewish nations – **known** to the Jews as the **Gentiles**
- And it's **great news for the Gentiles** – they will be included in the **Messiah's mission**

- The **Messiah** is not only going to come to **save Jews** but also **non-Jews – Gentiles** – like you and me
- And again – just like on Christmas Day – when Isaiah talked about a child being born – here in v1 – we see that the **Lord God calls the Messiah** from His mother’s womb
- This **should remind us** of the **Angel Gabriel** appearing to Mary and **telling her she will give birth to a son** (Luke 1:26-31)
- Then in v2 we get an idea of how special the Messiah is – **His words carry power and authority** – His words can pierce the hearts of people because they are like a sharpened sword
- The **Messiah** describes himself **like a carefully made and polished arrow** ready to be used in the service of the Lord at the right time
- But for the time being the **Messiah’s arrow** is safely tucked away in the Lord’s quiver until The Messiah’s mission and ministry begins (end of v2)
- This is a **reference to the hidden years of Jesus’ childhood and early adulthood** – until His ministry starts around about **age 30** – when the Messiah’s polished arrow is removed from the quiver and ready for action – **as He teaches people about God and about His mission**
- Then in v3 – the **Lord reveals** that the **Messiah** will be the **Lord’s servant** – and He will be from Israel – in other words He’s a Jew. And in His mission, **He will display God’s splendour** – the **Messiah’s mission** is all about bringing glory to God
- And even though the **Messiah’s mission** might seem like it was futile and in vain – v4 – where many people reject Him and don’t listen to His teaching – **He will be rewarded by God the Father, because He always does the Father’s will**

- And the **Messiah's mission** – v5 – is to **bring back Israel to the Lord**
- But there's **another part of the Messiah's mission** – not only will He restore the tribes of Israel – **He will also be a light to the Gentiles**
- What does **light** do?
- It **illuminates**
- It **gets rid of darkness**
- Wherever there is light – **darkness is exposed and got rid off**
- If you shine a light in a dark corner – it **shows up all the cobwebs and dust and dirt that you haven't cleaned!**
- The purpose of the Messiah's light is to **expose the darkness of sin and rebellion against God in people's lives**
- And to - bring people out of that darkness and into the light
- So, the **Messiah's mission** is to **save people from the punishment of sin and rebellion** against God
- As it says at the end of v7 – this mission to save people – this mission of salvation – **will reach the ends of the Earth**
- It's not a mission to just to Israel – God says that mission would be too small – No the Messiah's mission is to **every nation**
- If that **sounds familiar**
- It should
- **Jesus instructs His disciples** in Matt 28 – *to go and make disciples of all nations* (Matt 28:18-20)

- The Messiah's **Mission** is not going to be **easy though**
- See v7 – because of people's sin and rebellion – **some will reject His light** and even despise Him – even people in His **own nation** of Israel
- Yet in the end – **He will not be despised** – He will receive **the worship and honour He deserves** –
- You see – one day when Jesus returns in the future – **every knee will bow down to Him** (Phil 2:10)
- Now remember this **prophecy of Isaiah** was **700 years before Jesus was born**
- So, we climb into our time travelling machine – and **fast forward 700 years** to just after the **birth of Jesus the Messiah** –

[Please turn to Luke 2:22]

The Messiah's Mission Confirmed (Luke 2:22-40)

- And we're going to see Jesus the **Messiah's Mission confirmed**

[Powerpoint 2-Simeon]



- **Mary and Joseph take baby Jesus to the Temple** - to be presented to God
- This had to be done according to the **Law of Moses**

- In Exodus 13:2 (and v12) God says: *“Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether human or animal”*
- This presentation to God - could only happen once the **mother was cleansed from childbirth** which was about **40 days after childbirth** (Leviticus 12)
- When the parents present the child to the Lord – they were also **required to offer a sacrifice to the Lord** – the **Law required** that a **one-year-old lamb** be offered as a burnt offering and a **young pigeon or dove** as a sin offering. (Lev 12:6)
- If a lamb was not affordable – then **two doves or two young pigeons** were to be **offered** (Lev 12:8)
- We see here – that **Mary and Joseph were poor** and could only offer the **cheaper option**
- Now it just so happened by coincidence (NOT)– whilst Mary and Joseph were at the Temple – a **righteous and devout man** named **Simeon** was also at the Temple
- **Simeon had the Holy Spirit upon Him** and the Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would not die before He saw the Lord’s Messiah face to face
- That’s amazing – especially when we realize how many **generations have been waiting for God to send His Messiah**
- The **Holy Spirit** **arranges for Simeon to be in the Temple courts** just as Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple
- As we said last week – **God is in the miracle business**
- So, **Simeon takes baby Jesus** – the Messiah – **in his arms** – v28
- And **Simeon confirms the Messiah’s mission** in verses 30-32
- The **Messiah will bring salvation** – v30 – that is **the Messiah saves people from the punishment of their sins**

- The Messiah will be a **light for revelation to the Gentiles** – just as Isaiah prophesied – the **Messiah's salvation** will be for Gentiles as well as for the glory of the Jews
- **Simeon** says – He's more than **happy to be dismissed by God** – that is **die** – now that He's seen the Lord's Messiah face to face
- As Mary and Joseph are wrapping their head around what Simeon said about their baby (v33)
- **Simeon** has some **words for Mary** about her son
- Simeon says in v34 – *“this child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel – and will be a sign spoken against”*
- What Simeon means is – some will accept the Messiah and believe in Him and His mission and accept salvation – and others – as Isaiah prophesied will despise the Messiah – and **reject Him** – and in fact have Him arrested and killed
- It's the same today – in our nation of **Australia** – many reject Jesus – they don't want to know about Him – they're **happy to celebrate Christmas without Him** – they're **happy to live their lives without Him** – but remember God promises that one day Jesus will return to judge people – and those who reject Jesus – **won't be so happy then**
- **Simeon** goes on to say to **Mary** – v35 – *that a sword will pierce her soul too* – this is a **reference to the suffering Mary would endure** – as she watches her precious Son being mistreated and rejected and eventually crucified
- What Mary did not know then – was **God's plan** for the Messiah's mission meant that salvation came by the Messiah dying on a cruel cross to take the punishment for people's sin and rebellion against God – upon Himself – so people go free from that punishment – and receive forgiveness for their sins!

- Also, by coincidence (NOT) – there was another person at the temple that day – a prophet named **Anna** – a **widow for many years** - but not bitter at all about her loss – but instead a **devout woman** – always worshipping God at the temple
- **She too** – **came to Mary and Joseph** – and **gave thanks to God** for the Messiah child – and importantly she **told others about this Messiah child** – and how He would be a redeemer – by buying people back to God

The Response to the Messiah's Mission

- So, how should we respond to the Messiah's mission this morning?

[Powerpoint 3-Response]



- Like Simeon – we can **accept the gift of salvation** that the Messiah Jesus brings – and **thank and praise God**
- It's a bit like having a gift under the Christmas Tree – only this gift is Jesus the Messiah – who brings salvation – we can leave the gift of Jesus under the tree unopened – or - we can open it up to get salvation

- Like Anna – we **can speak to everyone about Jesus the Messiah** – it's pretty easy at this time of year – to **remind people that Christmas is about the Christ** – Christ being the Greek word for Messiah – God's Chosen One
- Like Mary and Joseph – we must continue to obey God's Law – obeying the **10 commandments** would be a good start!
- Finally, then - if we fast forward about 30 years from Jesus' birth – to when Jesus the Messiah begins His mission and ministry
- Jesus gives His followers two promises about light
- The first promise is in **John 8:12** -Jesus says: *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life".*
- **What a promise that is** – if we follow Jesus – we will never follow the ways of sin and never live in a state of continually sinning (1 John 1:5-7) – Instead we repent of our sin in order to stay close to the Light of the world – **who gives the light of life** – **that leads to eternal life!**
- The second promise is that as His followers we will reflect His Light. In Matthew 5:14-16 – **Jesus commands us to be His "lights"** – **we illuminate people's lives - with the light of Jesus**
- Just as the moon has no light of its own, and reflects the light of the sun, so as believers we reflect the Light of Jesus so that people can see Jesus' love in us. This love of Jesus in us will be obvious to people – **when they see our faith** – and when they see our good deeds – and as the Holy Spirit – works in us as the Holy Spirit worked in Simeon and Anna

Let's pray...

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you revealed your mission for Jesus the Messiah in the Old Testament and confirmed His mission in the New Testament.

Thank you, that we are recipients of Jesus' mission – that in your grace and love and mercy you allowed Jesus the Messiah to die for the sins of Jews and Gentiles – so that all who put their faith in Jesus the Messiah – can have the light of life – that leads to eternal life.

Help us to respond this morning by being Jesus' lights – reflecting His light and love – into people's lives – so that they too can become followers of Jesus – and receive His gift of salvation.

In His Name we pray. Amen.

Benediction (1 Peter 3:15)

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,