

Isaiah and Jesus; Isaiah 49

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Preacher: Craig Dyer

[0 : 00] I want to welcome you to the service of the Holy, a special welcome to the visitors who is with us. And as you'll see from the way things are set out, we celebrate the Lord's Supper today.

And if there are visitors who are communicant members of any branch of the Church of Christ, you are welcome to participate. The table is the Lord's table.

It's not our table, it doesn't belong to any locality or any denomination. If you are the Lord's people, the invitation is to come to the Lord's table. And we're thankful again today to have our preacher, the Reverend Craig Dyer, who we've enjoyed listening to over these last couple of days and we continue to look forward to what the Lord has to say to us through him today.

The evening service will be at 6 and again that will be conducted by Craig and that will be followed by a fellowship meeting as usual for the tea and coffee and Craig will share a word of testimony at that fellowship meeting also.

Tonight will be a retired collection as is our tradition and the money that is received tonight will be given to the Challenger bus outreach that has had a lot of impact here over the years.

[1 : 15] So if you feel able to give to that, please do so at the end of the evening service tonight. Course of the week, a few things to note. Ladies, Bible study as usual tomorrow at 8.

There will be a deacon's court meeting at half past 7 tomorrow evening and that will be in the manse. And then on Tuesday as usual, first fruits and go to the club at the usual times and places.

Wednesday prayer meeting at half past 7 as usual. The services next Lord's Day will be at 11 and I'll conduct that service myself, God willing. And at 6 we have an annual visit from Mr. Mervyn Franks with his wife Lucy and Mervyn will speak about the Wiresdale Children's Home Ministry and share God's word with us.

So these, I think, are all the intimations and I will worship God and sing to his praise. They sing, first of all, from Mission Praise, number 575.

Rejoice the Lord is King, your Lord and King adorer. Mortals give thanks in sin and triumph evermore. Lift up your heart, lift up your voice. Rejoice again, I say rejoice.

[2 : 32] And we'll stand to sing in a moment after the introduction. It's been. Let's unite our hearts and pray again. Let's pray. Amen. Loving God, our gracious and eternal heavenly Father, we thank you that once again on your day we are enabled to rejoice in our hearts and lift up our voices to proclaim the glory and the grace of Jesus Christ, our Savior, our Lord and our King.

Lord, we thank you that we have so much cause to rejoice as we think upon the elements that are before us, the table that is spread.

Lord, we thank you that we are called to remember today.

What joy should fill our hearts as we consider these things. Lord, we thank you that we are reminded of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lord, we thank you that we are reminded of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[4 : 05] Lord, we praise you for the gospel that we see around us in these tokens. And Lord, that we meditate upon as we sing and as we read and as we listen to your word preached.

Lord, that we thank you that we thank you for the gospel that we are called to remember today. We thank you that as we come in here this morning, our eyes are caused to look to Jesus. And we pray that we pray that we pray that we pray that we pray that we pray that our hearts would be lifted in praise to our Lord Jesus.

In him, all our hope is found. And Lord, we thank you for such a glorious hope. Even as we think about the reality of life and death as we did through your word yesterday.

And Lord, as we are confronted with the broken in time and in circumstance. Lord, we are reminded that we live in a world that is fallen.

A world where there is pain and suffering. Where there is death. Where there is sorrow. And yet, Lord, we thank you that the hope that we are given in Christ is a hope that overcomes every cause of tears in this world.

[5 : 36] We thank you that in Christ we have the hope of death defeated. We thank you that in Christ we have the hope of eternal life.

We thank you that in Christ we are given that hope and assurance that all our sin, all our stains, all our disgrace is taken from us.

As we look to him. And so, Lord, as we come this morning, we come examining our own hearts as we are called to.

And confessing the sin that we see ever before us. But for every look we take at ourselves, we are reminded that we are to take ten looks at Jesus.

And Lord, we pray that we would look to him this day in faith. And know the assurance of forgiveness and everlasting life.

[6 : 43] We thank you for his body broken for us. We thank you for his blood shed for us. Thank you that he was the atoning sacrifice for our sin.

We thank you that he laid down his life willingly and died for us. That he took the punishment in our place. And we thank you that he rose from the dead victorious.

Having defeated Satan. having paid the price of the sin of all who will look to him and having secured resurrection life for all who have faith in him what is the work of God it's to believe on the one who was sent and Lord we pray that he would grant faith and increase our faith that we would hold fast to the finished work and the promises of Christ we come to the table leaning upon him and his promises we come remembering his finished work his word in us not our own and Lord we come with the assurance that you will never drive us away when we come in faith and repentance so receive us in Christ we pray we pray that you would be with Craig as he leads this service today and that you would speak through him as you have called him that you would equip him we thank you for his ministry here over these days and we thank you for the ministry of Christianity Explore that he is involved with and has been for these 10 years we thank you even last evening how we heard of how that ministry has an impact in Scalpe and in Harrison and Lewis and in different places and we pray that you would continue to bless that work use it for your glory and we thank you for these encouragements we hear of how you are at work in the hearts and minds of people drawing them to Jesus through this course so continue to bless what we pray we pray for Nurse Mary who is away in Malawi at present and for all that she seeks to do in your name give her strength we pray and bless her and use her over these days we pray for all who are gathered here this morning and we pray your blessing upon us for those who know you Lord that we will be drawn closer to you and for those who don't yet know you we pray that you would open eyes and ears stir hearts and draw people in faith to receive that salvation that is freely offered in the gospel and Lord we pray for those who are absent that you would help those who are struggling with illness that you would equip those who have responsibilities and enable them to know your strength and to be salt and light in this world

Lord that you would awaken and revive those whose desire has gone or has waned and Lord that you would bless and meet each one at the point of their need pray especially today for those who are grieving as we are conscious of death in this community over these past weeks and months and even yesterday in such sudden circumstances we pray for your comfort in giving for all who believe hear our prayers continue with us we ask take away our sin empty us of all that would seek to exalt ourselves fill us with the Holy Spirit that we may lift you and lift up Jesus for we pray these things in Jesus name Amen boys and girls would you like to come forward please how's everybody today?

good good I've got a special present for you today do you know what it is? I'm not speaking somebody much more interesting than me is going to speak so Craig Craig who's been with us over the last few days he's going to speak to us this morning to you guys first and then he's going to lead the service from here on end so Craig I'll come and take your seat now lovely good morning everyone and good morning boys and girls it is brilliant for me to be in Tarbert this morning and to be in Harris this weekend do you know do you know what a beautiful place you live in?

[11 : 48] shake your head if you know that already shake your head tell me do you sometimes forget how beautiful it is? do you sometimes just get used to seeing it? here's some pictures that I took when David took me for a drive around the island yesterday now you may be you might recognise some of these places they're not in any particular order but have a look at these I just thought this was brilliant oh look at that I just wanted to push David in but I didn't I just thought it looked so beautiful what about this one?

do you know where that is? do you see the house with the red roof? I just thought that looked lovely doesn't it? oh it's beautiful let's have another one isn't that lovely looking out to the east I think if I remember rightly and I think it's just one more a lovely sandy beach there in the distance and if I'd had my bucket and spade we would have been down on the beach making sandcastles I have just loved being here this weekend I've really enjoyed meeting all of you seeing some of you over the weekend seeing you today and seeing all your mums and dads and aunts and uncles and grannies and granddads and neighbours and friends and teachers and doctors and nurses and policemen wonderful it's been a great joy now I'll tell you a really lovely thing happened yesterday a really lovely thing happened and it was a day of lovely things but as we were driving around the island

David who knows where all the good coffee shops are said we'll go up there for a cup of coffee and I should have taken a picture I took a picture from the place but it was a lovely maybe you've been it's a lovely coffee shop right on the cliffs overlooking the sea and overlooking the lovely sandy beach can anybody guess the name what was the name of the place Almara Almara yeah say again Talnamara Talnamara what was it called what's it called Grace what's it called John you find your tongues shout out yes that's it Talnamara Talnamara well we were at Talnamara and we we sat down and we had an amazing view through massive big beautiful windows and we were looking and we ordered we could have had anything we wanted and we ordered like David had a coffee and I had a pot of tea and we had some millionaire shortcake with that thing it was amazing beautiful and we thoroughly enjoyed it and we were chatting and enjoying each other's company and enjoying the view and then after about an hour or so maybe less than that we said right we better get going so we went to to pay the bill because you've got to do that you can't sneak out you've got to pay the bill so we went up to the counter to pay the bill and I said

I'll get it David said no no I'll get it I'll get it I said no no I'll get it he said no no no I'll get it I'll pay I'll pay so he's got his wallet out and the lady who was standing at the till do you know what she said she said your friends who were at table 6 have paid the bill for you they've paid for you that was amazing just that moment it reminded me of what it means to belong to the Lord Jesus it was a lovely discovery we were standing there and somebody had been kind enough to say I tell you what we'll do we'll treat them to their coffee and they'll be their shortcake we'll pay so they don't have to pay that was a lovely thing to do but it reminded me of what we're doing here today it reminded me of why we belong to the Lord Jesus it reminded me of why we love him and why we sing about him and why we tell other people about him because he did the same only so much more for all of us who trust in him didn't he can you imagine shopping with your mum maybe in the shop in the supermarket or something like that and getting to the checkout and you've got a bill to pay and your mum says

I forgot my purse or your dad says I forgot my wallet and he says to you have you got any money and you go in and you go yeah I've got 17 pence and the bill's 392 pounds or something like that because it's to do you all week and you've got 17 pence there's no way you can pay that bill wouldn't that be a horrible experience what would you do yesterday we had the lovely experience of somebody having paid for us and one day when we stand before almighty god and he knows how we've lived and he knows about all the wrong things that we say and do and think and all the right things that we should do that we don't do and the right things that we should think and we don't think the right things that we should say and we don't say he knows all about that and he knows that by ourselves we don't ever deserve to be with him forever in heaven and isn't it wonderful that at that point the lord jesus steps forth and says

[17 : 32] I've paid I've settled the bill I laid down my life on the cross so that everyone who's trusting in me has all their debt paid for their sin all the offence that we cause god has been dealt and the apostle paul talks about it a lot but there's one wee verse I want to give you this morning before we sing about the cross he says I've been crucified with christ it's no longer I who live but christ who lives in me because he's risen from the dead he lives in the power of an endless life and the life I now live I live by faith in the son of god who loved me and gave what did he give he gave himself for me he gave himself for me that's what it costs so that you and I could be put right with god and belong to him forever and if you're trusting in the lord jesus if you said to him even though you're young if you've said lord jesus thank you for going to the cross i trust in you that because you gave yourself for me you can forgive my sin you can pay my debt i can be free to live with you forever and that is thrilling so think about that the next time you're down at the coffee shop or the next time you're buying your sweeties think about how wonderful it is how kind of that these people yesterday to pay for our coffee and think how much more wonderful it is of the lord jesus to give himself for us now we're thinking today about the cross we're remembering what the lord jesus did we're proclaiming his death until he comes we're going to stand and sing about this as the boys and girls go to their classes oh to see the dawn of the darkest day christ on the road to calvary but it ends up triumphantly the power of the cross christ became sin for us we'll stand to sing after the introduction we're going to read in the word of god this morning from the prophecy of isaiah chapter 49 please let's turn in the word of god and follow it and hear it in isaiah 49 and as you listen to this and as you follow this morning ask yourself the question who is speaking of whom are these words true isaiah 49 verse 1 listen to me oh cosvans and give attention you peoples from afar the lord called me from the womb from the body of my mother he named my name he made my mouth like a sharp sword in the shadow of his hand he hid me he made me a polished arrow in his quiver he hid me away and he said to me you are my servant israel in whom i will be glorified but i said i have laboured in vain i spent my strength for nothing in vanity yet surely my right is with the lord and my recompense with my god and now the lord says he who formed me from the womb to be his servant to bring jacob back to him that israel might be gathered to him for i am honoured in the eyes of the lord and my god has become my strength he says it is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of jacob and to bring back the preserve of israel i will make you as a light for the nations that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth thus says the lord the redeemer of israel and his

holy one to one deeply despised and abhorred by the nation the servant of rulers kings shall see and arise princes and they shall prostrate themselves because of the lord who is faithful the holy one of israel who has chosen you let's ask the lord's blessing on his word our gracious god these are very precious moments to us as we hear and sing and tell of your infinite and astounding grace to us in the gift of your son the lord jesus and in a few moments we will return to this passage and look at it together as we prepare to break bread and as we've done on each occasion over this weekend we continue this morning to ask that you would bless this word to us today that you the living god would speak with that power that wakes the dead that you would draw attention to your son that before us this morning he would be altogether lovely that we might see fresh things about what he suffered for us and what he has brought us to so grant in the appropriate solemnity of our gathering this morning there would also be an overwhelming profound rejoicing in what we have in you will you bless the little ones as they go to their classes and we thank you for them and we pray that before the world would make its mark upon them they would come to know you and trust in you that you would be at work in their young lives and

Lord do no less for the rest of us keep us close to you we pray bring us close to you we pray even in these moments as we wait upon you in Jesus name we ask you amen now before we come to hear the word of God we're going to stand and sing a prayer speak oh Lord as we come to you to receive the fruit of your holy life let's ask him for that as we stand after the introduction well please turn back to that short reading in Isaiah 49 it was in 1995 that my wife and family and I moved to Glasgow to undertake the work at Harper Church and as we were meeting the church family at that time we met one couple Morris and Sally Sally was already a bright Christian and she'd been praying for her husband Morris to get saved for about 20 years and there was no real sense of him getting any closer to the

Lord he had struggled with alcoholism all his life but he'd been sober for many years and had enjoyed his sobriety but hadn't yet moved to a position of saving faith in Christ I'll never forget my first visit to their home Morris took my breath away by telling me now Craig Sally is saved but I'm not saved now you might be used to hearing unbelievers talk like that on Harris but I can tell you that is very unusual in Glasgow for someone to know that category of being saved or unsaved who actually didn't yet know the Lord and we joined with Sally and many others and prayed for Morris and taking every opportunity to tell him the gospel and then in 2001 we started running the Christianity Explored course that David was speaking about this morning and Morris came on the first course and on week four as we thought about the cross we flicked back from Mark's gospel to Psalm 22 to show the stunning precision of the prophecy there about the

Lord Jesus and about the nature of his death a psalmist writing hundreds of years before the Romans had invented crucifixion writing in detail about what it would be like for God the son to be nailed to the cross and crucified and suddenly Morris who had heard it all by this stage quietly said do you mean that what we are reading about Jesus is actual history and that was the strangest thing I had never thought the need to go over that with me but suddenly that night he heard that and we said that it was and that what happened to the Lord Jesus was written about hundreds of years before it happened and that was what the Lord used to open Morris eyes to the truth about his son Old Testament prophecy led Morris to New

[26 : 58] Testament reality to personal saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and that could happen to us this morning in the next half hour or so as we turn to Isaiah 49 and see a striking prophetic portrait of the world's only rescuer the Lord Jesus Christ and we should be surprised that it might have that massive impact because Isaiah writing in a way that was useful of course to his original hearers massively helpful to them he was also writing for us did you know that Isaiah is our book it's written for us listen to this Peter says in 1 Peter 1 concerning this salvation the prophets of whom Isaiah was one who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully inquiring what person or time the spirit of Christ in them was predicting was indicating what he predicted the sufferings of the

Christ and the subsequent glories it was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you as so precious to us they were not serving themselves but you in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven Isaiah served us by writing his book ahead of time about God's rescue plan about the grace that has now come he was inspired by the spirit of Christ he wrote about this servant of the Lord who was to come Isaiah didn't know who the fulfillment of his prophecy would be or when his prophecy would be fulfilled but history revealed only one person who precisely fulfilled this prophecy and it is our Savior the Lord Jesus and we know that because the gospel of Christ has been preached to us so maybe today someone maybe today all of us afresh will be helped as our friend

Boris was as we see the Lord Jesus the servant of the Lord and as we see him as Peter talks about in the predicted sufferings and subsequent glory that are his Isaiah chapter 49 picks up picks up from Isaiah chapter 42 which introduced us to the servant of the Lord in Isaiah 42 the servant of the Lord the ultimate servant of the Lord Jesus was spoken of biographically Isaiah wrote about him but in chapter 49 it is autobiographical Isaiah writes as it were for the servant of the Lord in the first six verses the servant of the Lord speaks directly and I want principally to draw your attention to two things for us to see the servant's experience in the womb and then the servant's experience in the world so first of all the servant's experience in the womb and we might say welcome to

Christmas morning on the 3rd of September here in Tarbat as we hear about God's ultimate servant and how he summons all the peoples and all the nations across the history of the world and across the face of the earth to pay attention to him and as we discover that the reason that he demands and deserves a global audience is because of something that would happen in the womb of a young Galilean girl called Mary hundreds of years after Isaiah wrote verse 1 listen to me on coastlands give attention you peoples from afar the Lord called me from the womb from the body of my mother he named my name millions of people as we know tragically who uphold the right of mothers to slay their babies in the womb find what almighty God does here deeply distasteful and utterly inconvenient because what happens as we see is that our God our creator establishes personhood in the womb now this is true of his unique son but it is not uniquely true of his son every human being is a person from conception because God says so irrespective of whether their parents or the law says so and it's a beautiful truth and here we see that beautiful of truth applied to the unique son of

God and we see the part that that prenatal personhood the fact that he was a person in the womb we see the part that that plays in our eternal salvation from our standpoint we could add that before calling him from the womb the Lord sent his servant to the womb Isaiah has already spoken about this in chapter 7 therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel and we learn here this morning that even from the womb he was called from the womb he was called his purpose was firmly established and we learn here this morning that from the womb he was named and the name that is given to the baby mentioned here is as stunning as Emmanuel God with us we see in verse 3 he said to me you're my servant Israel in whom I will be glorified this is where it gets a little bit confusing so if you're beginning to doze off

[32 : 56] I have sympathy with you but sharpen up for a minute think about this you might well be wondering if I've got this wrong since Israel is the name of a nation so how can I be talking about this referring to the Lord Jesus well before Israel was the name of a nation it was the name given to Jacob in Genesis 35 God appeared to Jacob again when he came to Paranaram and blessed him and God said to him your name is Jacob you shall no longer be called Jacob but Israel shall be your name so he called his name Israel and God said to him I am God almighty be fruitful and multiply a nation and a company of nations shall come from you and kings shall come from your own body the land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you and I will give the land to your offspring after you so Israel became the name of Jacob Israel's vast offspring and now that name according to Isaiah 49 was to be located again in an individual you see the nation of Israel was God's failed servant we've been looking at that haven't we over the weekend

God's failed servant was the nation of Israel and so the Lord announces here that he will send his faithful servant into the one and he will be faithful where the nation failed God will ultimately fulfill his promises to Abraham by his servant of excellence by his son the Lord Jesus who is the true Israel the one in whom God would be glorified where Israel had failed to bring him glory from the womb can you see he was called from the womb he was named from the womb he was shaped look at verse two he made my mouth like a sharp sword in the shadow of his hand he hid me he made me a polished arrow in his quiver he hid me away one of the purified preachers said you'll have heard this before God only had one son and he made him a creature and that's exactly what this verse is pointed to from the womb

God's servant who would glorify him was shaped to be a proclaimer of God's word to be a mighty weapon for the warfare of the word and the words from the servant's mouth are as effective you'll notice as you look at verse two as a sharp sword and as a polished arrow now polish polished arrow is not like your polished shoes you probably gave them a bit of a spit and polish last night maybe you did that you buffed up your shoes so that they look better you don't polish an arrow to make it look better you don't polish an arrow to put it in the display cabinet no you polish an arrow effectively sandpapering the tip and the shaft for smooth air flow to maximise distance to maximise accuracy so that it hits a target a sharp sword and a polished arrow look at the range and flexibility of God's servant's military engagement he is prepared as a sharp sword for close combat he is prepared as a polished arrow to reach distant target and the verse tells us that the Lord kept his servant like an archer keeps a chosen arrow in his quiver until a specific time for a specific target and then he reaches into his quiver and draws out this arrow and then he draws his bow and the arrow flies and I wonder do you know that the word of

God the word of the Lord Jesus is still engaged in that conflict today all over the world today men will stand and open the word of God and if they are wise they will stand under the authority of the word of God and they will call everyone else to live and to hear under the authority of the word of God and all over the world today that conflict is still being engaged by the word of God the sharp sword and the polished arrow still defeating the forces of darkness still opening eyes to see the lies still setting captives free even as the word is preached by mere men Hebrews 4 picks it up the word of God is living and active sharper than any two edged sword piercing to the division of soul and spirit of joints and of marrow and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart that's why we preach the word that's why we believe in preaching not for the sake of the preaching itself but this is how

God has said he is going to tackle the lost world this is how his word is going to be made known this is how people are going to hear him I love the line of the hymn from Francis Ridley Haberdale who captures something of that in his hymn Lord speak to me that I may speak and in one of the lines one of the verses he uses this phrase and win my words that they may reach the hidden depths of many a heart and I pray that when I preach it whether I know the people or not Lord that sharp sword Lord that polished arrow win my words that they may reach the hidden depths of many a heart that was the servant's experience in the womb named called and shaped secondly we see the servant's experience in the world so ask yourself the question what would you expect would be the experience of God's ultimate servant when he moved from the womb into the world from the womb that

[39 : 25] God created into the world that God created what would you expect his experience to be this servant who was going to bring honour to the Lord this servant who was prepared and called and shaped and named from the womb did no one get to lay a finger on him was it just a life of banquets and bouquets wherever he went well we know better don't we two things in particular about his experience that Isaiah tells us here number one he was despised it's one of the best known phrases of Isaiah isn't it applied to the servant of the Lord in Isaiah 53 verse 3 he was despised and rejected by men and here in verse 7 the Lord God and father of the servant the Lord Jesus speaks to him as his redeemer

God speaking to his son God the one who will redeem his life from the pit and look at what God our heavenly father knows about the way his son his servant will be treated verse 7 thus says the Lord the redeemer of Israel and we're not talking just about the nation but we're talking about being the nation the true Israel Jesus thus says the Lord the redeemer of Israel and his holy one to one deeply despised abhorred by the nation is that not the strangest thing to marvel at this morning that when the creator and sustainer of this universe who gives to all men life and breath and everything else sends his son into the world he knows that his son who will do nothing but bring him glory will be deeply despised and abhorred by the nation this phrase deeply despised means despised from the depths of our being it's a strong gut wrenching instinct of hatred and rejection of him an instinctive thing because he stands for the polar opposite of everything that we by nature stand for that's the welcome he was there this was part and parcel of the saviour's everyday experience in the world he was one deeply despised abhorred by the nation

Alec Matia helpfully unpacks the Hebrew in a way that I could never do and explains I quote the nation which despised and abhorred him is not a specific nation it's a generic term for the world outside of Israel so the fact that he is globally abhorred points to a general and popular sense of disgust in the human heart towards God the son and so we read don't we in John's gospel that you're studying on Sunday mornings he came to his own and what happened he's only in John's season these are stunningly strong words he in himself and what he stands for is revolting to people in general that's the meaning of these words he is nauseating repulsive loathsome he is intolerable that's what our text is telling us and when we open our eyes and look around the world that's what the world is telling us this explains what you may find as part and parcel of your everyday experience in the world if you are someone who has now come to deeply admire and adore the Lord

Jesus Christ you might find already that you're deeply despised and abhorred from doing that I don't know really the culture here is more complicated than it is in the mainland but certainly where I go and where I live if you love the Lord Jesus and speak well of him you will be abhorred by the culture and if it's not yet happening here I hate to say it's probably heading this way and Isaiah says so much more about the servant of the Lord being despised in the coming chapters but there's another thing I want you to notice this morning about him that really took me by surprise not only was he despised here's the thing that I didn't know before I came to look at this chapter about the Lord Jesus it's always good to find something you didn't know about him second thing he was discouraged this is an aspect of the servant of the

Lord's experience in the world that I don't think I'd ever understood before I knew that he was despised but I hadn't appreciated how much it got to him I hadn't appreciated how personally he felt discouraged and yet if I thought about it it shouldn't have surprised me because one of the things we know about the Lord Jesus is this that he was tempted in every way as we are yet was without sin and we discover here that one of the ways in which he was tempted sinlessly is that he was tempted to feel at points that his life's work was all for nothing where do I get that look at verse 4 he said to me so this is the servant speaking he said to me you're my servant

[45 : 51] Israel whom I will be glorified verse 4 but I said I have laboured in vain I have spent my strength for nothing in vanity you know what this is here is the spirit of Christ speaking through Isaiah about what the servant of the Lord would feel in the midst of his service for the Lord before us and he is unmistakably discouraged he spared no effort but it feels like in verse 4 he achieved no progress now notice that this crushing discouragement of verse 4 came in spite of knowing that the Lord would be faithful to him and would achieve all his purposes in the end so verse 5 and now the Lord says he who formed me from the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him that Israel might be gathered to him for I am honoured in the eyes of the

Lord and my God has become my strength he says it's too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel I'll make you as a light for the nations that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth so if you and I are saved this morning reached to the ends of the earth and it's the gospel of this saviour the implication here is that the agony of being despised and discouraged was the very means of bringing gospel light not only to Israel but to the nations of the world to the coastlines to Haras so the servant knows that he won't just lead the people of Israel but the people of all the nations and he won't just bring Israel back to Zion he'll bring the nations back to God and one day we know don't we that there are going to be people from every tongue and every tribe and every nation who will worship before the throne and before the land forever they shall come verse 12 says from afar but it's an amazing thing it's an amazing promise that he knew would happen and verse seven thus says the lord the redeemer of Israel and his holy one to one deeply despised abhorred by the nation the servant of rulers and here's what God says to him kings shall see in our eyes princes and they shall prostrate themselves because of the lord who is faithful the holy one of

Israel who has chosen you it means that the rulers of this world who today largely see God's servant as being at their disposal will in the end fall before him in worship and they will prostrate themselves at his feet we sang this morning of how the kings of all the kingdoms will bow at his command and fall beneath his feet so he lived in the promise of all this and yet this crushing discouragement in verse 4 came in spite of knowing that the lord would be faithful to him and would achieve all his purposes in the end wonder can you get that into your mind this morning this is the complexity of the one made flesh never doubting for a moment that his father would accomplish his purpose never doubting that his ministry would be successful ultimately and yet be at one and the same time utterly discouraged by an apparent lack of progress you see in order to be the redeemer of all his lesser servants like you and me who get discouraged and who sometimes unlike him feel like chucking it the lord Jesus had to face this the lord Jesus had to feel this the lord Jesus had to finish this i think verse 4 i have laboured in vain and spent my strength for nothing in vanity i think it gives us huge insight into the servant of the lord in the world for example in Luke 9 when he said to his disciples oh faithless and twisted generation how long am i to be with you and bear with you what's he saying yet he's saying i've laboured in vain i've spent my strength for nothing in vanity or Luke 19 when he drew near and saw the city he wept over it saying would that you even you had known on this day the things that made for peace but now they're hidden from your eyes for the days will come upon you when your enemies will set up a barricade round you and surround you and hen you in every side and tear you down to the ground you and your children within you and they will not leave one stone upon another in you because you did not know the time of your visitation as he goes to the cross he overlooks

Jerusalem and he sees the tragedy of the rejection it's as though he's saying I've laboured in vain I've spent my strength for nothing in vanity or can't you sense his utter exhaustion and colossal discouragement in Mark chapter 8 let me read it to you just listen and he left them got into the boat again and went to the other side now the disciples had forgotten to bring bread and they only had one loaf with them in the boat and he cautioned them saying watch out beware of the leaving of the Pharisees and the leaving of Herod and they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread and Jesus aware of this said to them why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread do you not yet perceive or understand are your hearts hardened have you eyes but do not see and having ears do you not hear when I broke the five loaves and the five for the five thousand how many basketfuls of broken pieces did they take up they said to him twelve and the seven for the four thousand how many baskets full of broken pieces did

I take up and they said to him seven and he said to them do you not yet understand that was the Lord Jesus in Mark 8 about to go to the cross the whole second half of Mark's gospel just is consumed with what happened in the immediate run up to the cross he's at that point they're three years into the ministry and with his cracked teeth as he sits in the boat and talks to them about the leaven of Herod and the leaven of the Pharisees they're still worried that he's ticked off at them for leaving the picnic he who fed five thousand and four thousand had more left over at the end than they had to begin with and he said to them do you not yet understand have I laboured in vain have I spent my strength for nothing and we've got to get a sense of this that our

[54 : 05] Savior went through and we haven't even got to the cross to the pinnacle of his suffering but we've got to get a sense of what that was like for him there were sore points during his ministry in this world when there was nothing to show for what we might call a Herculean effort multiplied by infinity and my friends this morning this is an incredible help to us to see it's an amazing thing for us to know that although he is God the son with infinite sovereign power at his disposal nonetheless as the servant he suffered colossal discouragement I have laboured in faith I have spent my strength for nothing in God that's tremendously helpful for us not only like us did he suffer discouragement more importantly for us he suffered discouragement

I wonder are you ready to give up speaking to your friends and colleagues about Jesus because you've begun to detect that they actually despise him and they despise you and they just don't get it it's becoming an embarrassment I wonder are you are you struggling with the demands of keeping the gospel core to church life all the work of revitalising a gospel church do you ever get to the point where you're just washed out with all the battling that's involved in doing that I wonder do some of us feel that we have better things to do with our time than to give our precious evenings to a bunch of people who don't really seem to appreciate what we're doing I wonder this morning as you sit here has your life taken so many twists and turns has it been for you as it is with a young person in my mind this morning one disappointment and frustration after another and it feels so utterly futile and it feels so utterly pointless and so utterly hopeless or is the battle to live for Christ the battle to live with Christ so fierce in your life and nobody else knows it so exhausting so discouraging through a constant awareness of your own sin and weakness that you're thinking of quietly walking away from him meet your saviour afresh this morning in Isaiah chapter 49 he knows what it feels like to say

I have laboured in vain I've spent my strength on nothing and vanity and not only can you turn to him knowing that he knows how that feels he suffered it for you because when you and I get discouraged we sin when he got discouraged he didn't sin and part of what he went to the cross to pay for as well as the total tonnage of the sin that we have some clue about was all the sin that we haven't any clue about he went and paid for my failure to process discouragement properly because he didn't handle it improperly he handled it perfectly he said in verse 4 in the midst of this sense of all being for nothing yet surely my right is with the Lord and my recompense with my God in other words for the servant of the Lord the crushing weight of discouragement is lifted by the thought that it's for God to decide what has been accomplished it's for

God in the end to say what has been worthwhile and the servant of the Lord finds huge encouragement in that that's exactly the principle that Paul picks up isn't it 1 Corinthians 4 he says therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time before the Lord comes who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart then each one will receive his commendation from God or in 2 Peter how he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly he did that for us he handled it perfectly sinlessly so that he could die in the place of those who even handled discouragement imperfectly and sinfully what a savior we have but you see this part of verse 4 leads us to where Shona took us last night in a testimony if you were here what this means when he says surely my right is with the

Lord and my recompense with my God because he knows that God will accomplish his purposes because he knows that no matter how in a moment of time it's crushingly discouraging ultimately he is committed to God's sovereign plan and purpose it means that we can go to 1 Corinthians 15:58 therefore my beloved brothers be steadfast immovable always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain and that's not Paul bringing a corrective to the word of Christ that's Paul speaking the word of Christ that's the other book end in this so there was the time for the Lord Jesus when he said I have spent my strength for nothing and in vanity I have laboured in vain and the same saviour having suffered that for us having suffered that like us though sinlessly gets to the point of saying to his people my father has the plan he's working out everything one day the nations are going to bow before his son the Lord

[60 : 45] Jesus one day there's going to be an end garden they're going to come from afar they're going to come from every tongue and every tribe and every nation there's going to be an eternal rejoicing in the presence of the Lord as we're bodily raised to be with him in the new creation forever so my beloved brothers my beloved sister be steadfast and movable always abounding in the work knowing that in the Lord because of the Lord his labour was not in vain and therefore our labour was not in vain let's pray together so we ask you our gracious heavenly father to minister this glory spirit about our saviour to us this morning his experience in the woman his experience in the world but now he is exalted to the highest place he is the king of the nations he is the king of the heavens and one day we will bow before him and marvel at all he has done our father we thank you for the perfection of your servant the Lord

Jesus we thank you that he is the one in whom you have been glorified and we thank you that because he lives we also shall live so now as we come to proclaim a reverent joyful confidence in his death for us his sin bearing death we ask you to draw near to be to be our to be our strength and our encourager in his precious name we ask it amen we're going to stand and sing together 755 when I surveyed a wondrous cross on which on which the prince of glory we come to that part in our gathering this morning when in particular we move to the things of the lord's table and david introduced it beautifully to us at the beginning reminding us that it is his and not ours and therefore we are here to do his bidding and it is for our blessing that the lord jesus has instituted the lord's name taking the most fundamental elements of life bread and wine and fruit juice and bringing from them the most stunning glorious reassuring realities so that as we take it by faith we are strengthened in our hearts that's what we want to do this morning and when we talk about an invitation to the table it is really more properly an instruction of the lord jesus listen for i receive from the lord what i also pass on to you delivered to you that the lord jesus and i was betrayed took bread and when he gave him thanks he broke it and said this is my body which is for you do this in remembrance of me do it i know i know well and you know well that there's so much in me that said i really mustn't but he says no do it remember what i did to achieve your salvation remember what i bore for the debt to be paid remember what i went through to reconcile to you to god and as you remember it do it and the same way after supper he took the cup saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me for as often as you eat the bread and drink the cup you proclaim the lord's death until he comes so it's a proclamation we're proclaiming to one another our confidence in the finished work of our saviour we're proclaiming to one another not that we are great but that he is great that he is a glorious and faithful saviour and redeemer that he is the rescuer of sinners we're proclaiming to one another he is our hope he is our trust he is our joy and our delight and we're bringing him the worship of our hearts as we honour him in this way as we prepare to bring red we're going to sing in the

Gaelic Psalm 118 verses 15 and 16 what I'm going to see the Lord's supper is a gift to us from the Lord Jesus himself and it is to be approached with both reasonable flexibility and rigid inflexibility there is reasonable flexibility regarding when and how often we break bread like this nothing in the scripture is specified about the frequency or the location of when we break bread likewise in terms of the materials we use there is flexibility we're not told there's any insistence on a particular type of bread or drink and in terms of how we reconstruct the Lord's supper who leads and when we sing and who prays and what we read there is nothing specified so there is a reasonable flexibility but the

Lord is not easy going about the way his church remembers his death alongside that reasonable flexibility on non essentials there is rigid inflexibility on the essentials brothers and sisters this is a corporate gathering it is personal but you and I are in a corporate relationship with the Lord Jesus not just a personal relationship with him Paul says when you come together it's not the Lord's supper that you eat verse 33 of 1 Corinthians 11 so my brothers when you come together to eat wait for one another so this is a corporate expression of our love for him and faith in him and also we're not to confuse our need for physical nourishment with our need for spiritual nourishment in verse 21

Paul says in eating each one goes ahead with his own meal one goes hungry another gets drunk what do you not have houses to eat and drink in if anyone is hungry let them eat at home so that it will not be so that when you come together it will not be for judgment so we're to guard against the spies in the church the gathering of ourselves together and then he goes on for I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you that the Lord Jesus the night that he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks he broke it and said this is my body which is for you do this in remembrance of me and in the same way he took the cup after supper saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me so we're here to remember historic facts that's what the saviour was pointing us to the creed says doesn't it

[69 : 08] I believe in Jesus Christ God's only son or Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit born of the Virgin Mary suffered under Pontius Pilate was crucified died buried descended to the dead on the third day he rose again he ascended into heaven he is seated at the right hand of the father he will come to judge the living and the dead that's what it means to remember to call to mind to focus on these eternal historic realities and as often as you eat the bread and drink the cup you proclaim so we're here to remember and we're here to proclaim to the world to each other our confidence in the finished work of Christ whoever therefore eats the bread and drinks of the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and the blood of the Lord this is rigidly inflexible the way to eat and drink worthily is first of all as I've said to eat and drink if we consistently absent ourselves we're dishonouring the Lord

Jesus and Paul helps us greatly to see how we participate worthily verse 28 let a person examine himself and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup so you're not examining yourself to make sure you're perfect you're not examining yourself to make sure you've come up to a certain standard that makes you worthy this table is for sinners this table is for broken men and women you're examining to see that you know your sin and hate your sin and repent of your sin and trust in Jesus alone to deliver you from his power and from his presence and then eat and drink because this is how we discern what the Lord accomplished for us he says in verse 21 29 for anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment himself by his grace because of his life because of his death because of his resurrection because of his kingly rule we you and

I may eat and drink worthily by self examination to make sure all our hope is rooted in him and by discernment of what he has accomplished and of the meaning of this simple feast so grant now our gracious Lord and God that as we have come together grant that it will indeed be the Lord's supper that we eat as we remember the one who on the night of his betrayal took the bread so we take the bread and we give you thanks for what it means we thank you today for all of your provision but ultimately we thank you for our heavenly food for our saviour the Lord Jesus who loved us and gave himself for us for the breaking of his body for the shedding of his blood for the accomplishment of our salvation the cleansing of our sin the reconciliation of rebels to God we bring you our thanks in his precious name

Amen We're not going to break bread like this forever it is a temporary necessary gathering of the Lord's people temporary because it is until he comes necessary because he hasn't yet come and in that period of time forever long it lasts the Lord's people need regular reminders of how great is our salvation I sometimes find the Lord's table the danger is that I'm more overwhelmed by my unworthiness than by his worthiness but surely we've got to get that balance right if we're going to be overwhelmed by anything it ought to be by the awesome glory of our saviour and by the power of what he has accomplished for us by his life and death and resurrection and kingly reign and promised return and that's the thing that has the impact of our lives as we go isn't it that's the thing that we he goes with us he's poured his spirit out and he lives within us and we live for his glory we're going to sing together verses 17 to 19 of psalm 72 and then we're going to have going to be led in benediction in

Ghanak let's stand to sing amen yeah yeah yeah yeah you yeah yeah