

Scripture Text

Isaiah 41.1-20

Context

From Isaiah 40-55 the prophet is addressing the Jewish captives far away in Babylon in the 6th century, announcing that God is going to come with world changing display of his glory (40.5). Isaiah 40 has begun with God offering comfort to his people, promising to restore them, revealing the eternity of his work and uniqueness of himself. In Chapter 40, he has given a great message of comfort, and now continues to show how he can be trusted to deliver on his message of comfort, because he is the Sovereign God over all history, and because he has chosen Israel.

Observation and Meaning

- V1-4 is a courtroom scene, where God summons the nations. What are the nations to know about God in these verses?
- V5-7: How do the gentile nations respond to God? How do these verses help us see the futility of their schemes to thwart God's purposes?
- In v9, 14 and 17 "Israel, my servant" is referred to in uncomplimentary ways. What are these? How (in v10, 14-15 and 17-20) are these situations transformed?
- Regarding the transformation of these three previous situations, what is emphasised regarding why and how this transformation will occur?
- What is the overarching theme of this section of scripture? How do the truths in this section help us to trust in God's message of comfort in Chapter 40?

Big Idea

God continues to comfort his people by showing himself as the Sovereign Lord over all the earth, who ordains history, and who has chosen his people to display his glory to the nations.

Connecting to Bible Storyline

God, in love, plans to redeem a people for his own possession. He ordains history to this end, and invites us to trust him as he fulfills his purposes through his people.

Sermon Outline

1. Understand God's rule over all nations (v1-7)
2. Understand God's resolve towards his people (v8-20)
 - a. God is the Saviour who chooses and then helps his people (v8-10)
 - b. God is the Redeemer who strengthens his people against their enemies (v11-16)
 - c. God is the Father who hears his people's prayers (v17-20)
3. Jesus and true rest

Applications

- What about the vision of God in v1-4 makes you fearful? How does it make you feel before God?
- What, apart from God, are you prone to put your trust or confidence in (as per v5-7)? How do these verses help you see the ultimate futility of these efforts?
- How does the fact that God chosen us, and promises to strengthen us help to deal with any negative fear that we might have as a result of v1-4?
- In what areas of your life do you most need to learn to trust God? How do v8-20 personally encourage you to trust God? What will it look like for you to trust God in these areas?

Guide for Study Leaders

Use the C.O.M.A. (Context, Observation, Meaning, Application) method to work through the biblical text.

Context

Pay attention to the surrounding verses, paragraphs, chapters, events, etc. to see how this passage fits within the context of this particular book of the Bible.

Note how this passage fits within the larger storyline of the whole Bible, i.e. how God is saving a people through Jesus Christ to live under his rule in his place.

Observation & Meaning

Make careful observations of the biblical text. Notice details such as linking words (eg. "for", "if", "therefore"), repetition, dialogue, narrative, OT quotations, etc.

To understand the meaning of the biblical text, we need to discern the author's purpose or intent: Why is the biblical author writing this?

Helpful questions to ask include:

Who is writing and to whom?

What is the situation of the author and of the readers?

Are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed?

Are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

Application

Apply God's word to the heart. Move beyond merely addressing circumstances and behaviour by asking good "heart" questions. For example: Why do we do what we do? What do we really desire?

Always connect the gospel to application. For example, what difference does knowing Christ make to our obedience to God?

Ask what the passage teaches us about God, ourselves, salvation in Christ, the church, the world, etc.