

Marks

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading
Giving Time, Talents & Resources
Spiritual Friendships ■ Service In & Beyond the Church

of Discipleship

May 9, 2021

Day 1: Isaiah 49:8

Thus says the Lord: In a time of favor I have answered you, on a day of salvation I have helped you; I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages;

Hope does not arise out of plenty but out of scarcity. When the people of Israel had all they needed there was no need to hope, for they believed all of God's promises were realized. The servant (the "you" referred to) is the one who embodied hope. The servant was faithful to his calling. God has called him to declare the message of salvation in the midst of the despair of the captured people of Israel.

Question: How does God show that the "day of salvation" is coming?

Challenge: Can you think of three or four people that for you embody hope?

Scripture: Isaiah 40:1-31

Day 2: Isaiah 49:9-11

saying to the prisoners, 'Come out', to those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves.' They shall feed along the ways, on all the bare heights shall be their pasture; they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them down, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them. And I will turn all my mountains into a road, and my highways shall be raised up.

The servant reminds the people of Moses. Moses called the people who were in slavery to leave their slavery and go out into the wilderness. Unlike the journey Moses led, the people on this journey will not last 40 years and it will not involve terrible conditions. Moses gave them written covenant, the servant is the covenant. Moses apportioned inheritances in a new land. The servant gives hope to the desolated ones in the wilderness.

Question: What Psalm does this sound like?

Challenge: Think of someone who is right now in a dark time in their life. Think of a way to encourage them to "come out" of the darkness.

Scripture: Isaiah 41:1-29

Day 3: Isaiah 49:12

Lo, these shall come from far away, and lo, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Syene.

The servant will gather all the lost and forgotten peoples from all over the world. The servant does the job of gathering by being a beacon of hope. Isaiah said earlier in the book, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness — on them light has shined." Matthew, picking up on the theme of the light guiding those in search of hope writes, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." The servant is not in a form that people would usually see great power and hope, but because he is God's servant, the servant, like Moses and all others God has called, has the power of God to give hope.

Question: Why are south and east left out of the directions from which the people will come?

Challenge: Where is Syene located today?

Scripture: Isaiah 42:1-17

Day 4: Isaiah 49:13

Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people, and will have compassion on his suffering ones.

The redemption God has in mind affects the whole earth. God is not just redeeming the people, but the land as well. There has always been a close connection between the land and the people. The land provides a living for the people and the people care for the land so it can produce for generations. In the creation of the world God appointed humans to be stewards of creation (Genesis 2:15). Our responsibility is not just to future generations, but the land itself is created by God and thus is sacred. In short the land was created to be used, not abused, and if used correctly it will last for generations.

Question: Do you think nature can be happy and even express that happiness? If so how?

Challenge: Think about the difference between comfort and help. Do you think the terms mean the same thing?

Scripture: Isaiah 44:1-8

Day 5: Isaiah 49:14

But Zion said, 'The Lord has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me.'

Zion/Jerusalem is a metaphor for the promised land. The holy city is without comfort because her children are gone and she is too broken to have any more children. Zion's cry is that there is no one to comfort her. Comfort is more than an emotional understanding; it entails restitution and explanation – from God. The servant is providing comfort by explaining why and how God has not forsaken Zion. Real hope comes not from telling a person "it will be OK" but by explaining what went wrong and then by staying with the person, in their sadness, until they can once again go on.

Question: Who else said "my God why has thou forsaken me?"

Challenge: When have you questioned God's care for you? Or felt God had forsaken you?

Scripture: Isaiah 44:21-28

Day 6: Isaiah 49:15-16

Can a woman forget her nursing-child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me.

The word of comfort comes from the servant (who is now a mother) tells Zion that her children that were born in exile were coming back. These children were born in Zion's bereavement so she did not know they existed. The Kings and Queens of the foreign land were the foster parents just as Moses was born and nourished by a Jewish mother but raised by an Egyptian foster mother who was a Queen. God promised Moses that the Egyptians would "know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelite children out from among them." The servant promises that the "foster nations" themselves will come to Zion with her children; so that Zion will know that I am the Lord. God is concerned that the people know that God is Lord. The exiles needed to know that God had not forsaken them.

Question: How do you know that you are the child of your parents? After all, you were a baby when you were born.

Challenge: How does God assure us that we are a child of God?

Scripture: Romans 10:1-17