

TCC Sunday 6th April 2014 – Emotions are no bad thing – Isaiah 9v1-10v4

Title: “Emotions are no bad thing”

Introduction

We had French students, 4 16 year old girls. They had a great time and when they went they all cried!

We are not always emotional as British people, but actually we need to learn to use our emotions because this passage is one that demands it.

Last week

Last week, as we tackled **Isaiah Chapter 8**, we saw a series of choices that were before the people and they didn't choose well.

How many of us look back and we survey our lives and maybe in a number of places we have some regrets, we think of things that might have been that weren't. Decisions that we made which proved to be very costly – perhaps in terms of relationships that foundered and which have had long-term implications.

Well the people of Israel took God's things very lightly and they turned their backs on the Law and on the Testimony and as **Chapter 8 and verse 20** said – “they have no light of dawn!”

The verses read on, in concluding the chapter:

Isaiah 8 verses 21-22 “Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God. Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness.”

And you can see this is **such a GLOOMY PICTURE**.

And perhaps you can quite strongly identify with this – perhaps you too say – “there is way too much gloom and failure and basic messiness in my life”.

How this chapter starts

Well, notice how our chapter for today starts – the opening word is **“Nevertheless, ...”**

It is one of those times when we have a little word which is so very pregnant with meaning and which can completely turn a situation around.

I think of that passage at the start of **Ephesians chapter 2**, which is truly a very dark, dingy and dismal passage to start with – let me read it:

Ephesians 2v1-6 “As for you, you were **dead in your transgressions and sins**, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, **we were by nature objects of**

wrath.

BUT because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God **raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus**”

Structure

This morning as we come to work through **Isaiah Chapter 9 and the first 4 verses of Chapter 10** – we are going to divide it down into its 2 natural sections:

- FIRSTLY we have **Chapter 9 and Verses 1 through 7** – which I am going to call: **“Meeting our Messiah – Grasping His Zeal”**
- and then SECONDLY – **Chapter 9 and Verses 8 through to chapter 10 and Verse 4** – what I’m going to call **“Meeting our Maker – Getting His Wrath”**

So then:

- FIRST – **“Meeting our Messiah – Grasping His Zeal”**
- SECOND – **“Meeting our Maker – Getting His Wrath”**

1] “Meeting our Messiah – Grasping His Zeal” (Chapter 9v1-7)

A real change of mood

And one of the first things that we see here is that there is a real change of mood.

As chapter 9 breaks we are coming out of the woods and into the bright light of a new day:

Verse 1 “Nevertheless, there will be **no more gloom** for those who were in distress...”

And it is so important that we connect with and feel the emotional markers that the passage is giving us – it is as though Isaiah were saying to us – “Get with mood, fall in step with the rhythm!”

Dark times

Q. I don’t know what your attitude is to DARK TIMES? Yes – they are hard and we don’t enjoy them – but really God has a way of adding great value to them. God seems to use the difficult avenues of our lives to teach us a whole host of things about ourselves and more importantly a ton of things about Himself.

Notices here in Verse 1, how God chooses to use a people and a place that had known the brunt of the pain, to be the very people and place that would know the most blessing in the future.

Verse 1 “...In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honour Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan.”

Zebulun & Naphtali – Galilee

Let me just explain the geographical references here.

Zebulun and Naphtali are two of the twelve tribes of Israel and they are two of the Northern-most tribes and Naphtali surrounds the area to the West of the sea of Galilee which was where Jesus ministry was based.

When the Assyrians swept in and took out the Northern Kingdom of Israel – these two tribes were those that really bore the initial brunt of things.

So it is fitting that just as they were the first to know the humbling effect of defeat by the Assyrian armies, so too they would be the first to know the gracious hand of God when He would come as Immanuel, “God with us”, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ some 700 years later on.

Gentiles

Notice the mention of Gentiles here. It is a little too easy to think that the OT is all about the Jews and the Israelites and that any notion of non-Jews (of Gentiles) being a part of the people of God, is solely confined to a NT context.

Well here we can see that God has always had it in His mind to honour, to extend grace to Gentiles as well as Jews.

And this of course is evident all the way through the OT – just think of Abraham and the promise that ALL NATIONS WOULD BE BLESSED THROUGH HIM.

First Major Portrait

Isaiah Chapter 9 – is a passage that you will be more familiar with as something that tends to get preached on at Christmas time.

And this is the first time, here in this book of Isaiah, that **we have a major portrait and description of the COMING KING**. As the book progresses we will meet other sections which will fill in more of the details of what this Messiah, this Christ child will bring.

So this then is our first glimpse of what is to come – and that makes this section in **Isaiah 9** a very important section.

LIGHT & JOY

And straightaway we come to see that this means two things: **LIGHT** and **JOY**.

Let me read **Verses 2 & 3**:

Isaiah 9 verses 2-3 “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder.”

Matthew 4

In Matthew’s gospel – which is the first one there in our NT’s – we see that again and again he joins up

the dots for us and LINKS together the OT story with the unfolding NT story. It is a gospel written specifically with Jews in mind.

Let me read a few verses from **Matthew chapter 4**:

Matthew 4 verses 12-17 “When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali—to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.” From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”

And whatever else we are going to find in this first portrait of the Messiah that is to come – we can see that this is going to be like the bright dawning of a new day and the end result is going to be **TREMENDOUS JOY**.

This is truly **THRILLING STUFF**.

To get the sense of it we are given some examples:

- IT IS LIKE - people at harvest – once again there is **PLENTY**, one again people can breathe a sigh of relief and can enjoy a **HARVEST FESTIVAL** as the store houses are now refreshed.
- IT IS LIKE – people when they have just won a great military victory and they can gather up all the spoils of war that are simply ripe for the picking

Application

And just trying to apply that to us – when Jesus comes into a life, at the start that person is living in a dark monochrome world (oh sure there will be some happy things) but by comparison it is still a very bleak landscape. When Jesus (who is the Light of the World) enters in, then it is great Light entering in to the Valley of the Shadow of Death. This is the picture we gain in **Psalm 23** our testimony becomes the same as King David:

Psalm 23 verse 4 “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”

3 x FOR statements

And what we have in Verses 4 through to 7 is **a set of 3 statements** that all begin with the little word **FOR**. These, taken together, give the substance to why we will have this great **LIGHT** and this remarkable **JOY**:

#1 – Freedom and release (Verse 4)

The first is at **Verse 4**:

Verse 4 “For as in the day of Midian’s defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.

This verse has both a **FOREGROUND** and a **BACKGROUND** aspect that we do well to understand and

recognise – let me start with the foreground one:

- (FOREGROUND) – the verse speaks of Midian and their defeat – this is not some current event that has just taken place or something that God is going to do in the future – no, this is a HISTORICAL BACK-REFERENCE and it takes us back to the time of the Judges and to that man GIDEON.

Now, the name GIDEON, might not mean anything to you. Gideon’s story is one we read in Judges chapters 6-8 and he was someone through whom God worked a mighty victory and He delivered them from the crushing oppression of the Midianites.

It was that story when the angel of the LORD comes to Gideon when he was a nothing and a nobody and tells him that he is a Mighty Warrior. It was that story where God tells him to get an army together and to go and defeat all the massive hordes of the Midianites.

And having amassed an army of 32,000 men (which still would have not been enough to do the job) – God tells him to lose some – and then to lose some more.

At the end of the day – God only left him with 300 men!!

So the defeat of the Midianites, was one of the most remarkable victories in the OT and one in which God stamped His own mark very clearly.

They went from a situation of grave oppression to one of great and unbelievable victory!

Let me go on to the somewhat more BACKGROUND aspect:

- (BACKGROUND) – the choice of descriptive words – YOKE, BAR across their shoulders, ROD of their oppressor – very much reminds us of the period of time when the Israelites were suffering under the oppression of the Egyptians.

It reminds us of the time when God raised up Moses to go and deliver his people.

It reminds us of the GREAT ACT OF THE EXODUS.

Deuteronomy 4 verse 34 sums this up very helpfully: “Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by miraculous signs and wonders, by war, by a **mighty hand and an outstretched arm**, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?”

And time and again we have that term the OUTSTRETCHED ARM of GOD – working on behalf of His people and DELIVERING them. Our God is the God of DELIVERANCE, He is the God of EXODUS.

#2 – The battle is over

The 2nd FOR statement comes up in Verse 5, even though this doesn’t get put in by the NIV:

So it is literally **(Verse 5)** “FOR every warrior’s boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.”

This is a pretty big vision that Isaiah is receiving and which he is passing on to the people.

The test of a true prophet

Let me just remind you a little bit about how prophets in the Bible worked.

There was a basic test for the validity of a prophet. We have it there in **Deuteronomy 18**:

Deuteronomy 18 verses 21-22 “You may say to yourselves, “How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?” If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.”

So when Isaiah (or any other prophet) started to speak words from the LORD – they would simply see whether or not their words came true or whether they fell to the ground!

And you may remember, the young Samuel who as he grew up became a powerful priest and prophet in Israel, the Scripture says of him:

(1 Samuel 3 verse 19) “The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let **none of his words fall to the ground.**”

And many of Isaiah’s prophecies were short term – things that would either happen almost immediately or which would happen in the next couple of years.

EASILY VERIFIED – that is the point I am making.

Other prophecies of Isaiah were MEDIUM TERM. So for example, back 2 chapters – in **Isaiah 7 and verse 8** we read: **“Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be too shattered to be a people.”**

And again people would look back and say to themselves – well Isaiah was right again. They would have been more surprised if these things had not happened given that they knew his earlier prophecies had all been already confirmed.

But Isaiah is not just about SHORT-TERM and MEDIUM-TERM words from the LORD – he also speaks about things that will take 700+ years to happen and other things that will not come to pass until God wraps up the whole of human history.

HOWEVER – what this means is that we can and should have great confidence in these words.

YES – there is coming a day when WARS WILL CEASE – it sounds far too difficult to really believe. Our world is shattered because of wars on every continent.

So the wonderful reality of LIGHT and JOY is going to be UNDERGIRDED by the reality of all wars coming to an end.

#3 – A child is born

We have a third FOR statement – and this is the really well-known one – even people in the street would be able to complete the verse:

“For unto us...:

“A CHILD IS BORN, to us a SON IS GIVEN and the GOVERNMENT SHALL BE ON HIS SHOULDERS.”

We could be forgiven for thinking that here God is simply ushering in a new season, a season of better times, a time when things will get better and when the future will simply be a bit brighter or even a lot brighter.

We could be forgiven for thinking that here is a moment in history when God is going to be somewhat more in attendance – when He is going to make His presence felt more keenly.

BUT we need to see that **Verses 6 & 7** do not actually say that.

Let me point out a few things that stand out quite clearly:

- FIRSTLY – we see that it is **not** a new season that God is announcing through His prophet – it is A NEW SON.

The true SOURCE of this GREAT LIGHT DAWNING of this GREAT JOY that is emerging is located entirely in a PERSON, in a SON who is to come.

And we know that this one that Isaiah was pointing to was the Messiah, the Christ – to Jesus of Nazareth (who lived and ministered 700 years later on in Galilee of the Gentiles by the Sea).

And already Isaiah has been telling us about this child (Isaiah 7v14) that he will be born of a virgin.

That he will be a great king – he will govern, he will reign.

- SECONDLY – we see that he will be more than just a great king, more than simply an outstanding and victorious leader.

We learn that he will be a: WONDERFUL COUNSELLOR – (he will have tremendous wisdom – he will be an even greater and wiser Solomon) that he will be a PRINCE OF PEACE – (he will bring about a tremendous blessing through PEACE).

But we see that this SON is going to be much more than just some person whereby we see God in Attendance – NO – here we have one whereby we have GOD INCARNATE!! GOD IN PERSON!!

There is no other way to explain the fact that he is called MIGHTY GOD, that He is called EVERLASTING FATHER (how wonderful to comprehend the idea that we have a Father who will never leave us ever!)

We cannot do justice to the idea that He will reign on David's throne forever.

It is quite MIND-BLOWING – and this was why the Angel Gabriel explained things to Mary, the one who would become the mother of Jesus: (**Luke 1v31-35**) “You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.” “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

The Zeal of the LORD

Notice how this section ends – it really is an important statement:

Verse 7 “The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.”

This is, if you like, the CAST IRON GUARANTEE.

I don't know if you're into Cooking – but maybe you have those LE CREUSET iron cookware or perhaps the sort of PYREX DISHES that never break.

It is nothing less than God's ZEAL that is going to bring this to pass.

This is why we have a constant alternation through these verses of things being spoken of in the past tense and then spoke of in the future tense. Yes it will surely happen in the future – it has not yet actually taken place in Isaiah's day – BUT it might as well have done so – it is THAT CERTAIN.

This is God's baby

I suppose another way of looking at this is to say that what we are reading about here is God's baby – it is His Big Project which is His Great Passion.

We talk about things being “someone's baby” – e.g. that car – oh! it's his baby you know – it's his big thing upon which he will lavish every care and attention – he will throw all his time, money, energy and love into it.

The Father heart of God

The coming of Jesus, as Isaiah is painting it here, is coming out of the very heart of God the Father.

Q. I wonder whether you start to feel something of His Passion, something of His determination, something of the certainty?

We've seen thus far: **1] Meeting our Messiah – Grasping His Zeal.**

I want to look now, somewhat more briefly at the balancing half of this chapter – and what I'm going to call:

2] “Meeting our Maker – Getting His Wrath” (Chapter 9v8-10v4)

We take this section on into the first 4 verses of the next chapter simply because we have a little refrain that repeats itself 4 times – and the last of these is at chapter 10 and verse 4.

The refrain

The refrain (our chorus, if you prefer another name) is in verse 12, 17, 21 and 10v4 and says:

“Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised.”

You see, although you might initially think, well this is just typical, here we have our vengeful and vindictive God striking out again – does he really have to be like this – couldn’t he just be a bit more chilled.

The flip side

But really what we are seeing here is something of the flip side of things.

We have a God who cares, a God who feels things intensely, a God who acts from the depths of His heart and so we are not surprised that God will keenly feel it when people act in ways that spurns or rejects the wonderful things that He wants to do and will one day do.

- God has BOTH an outstretched hand to SAVE
- He also has an upraised hand to DISCIPLINE those that reject Him

The 4 sections

Let me briefly headline the four sections that follow on from Verse 8:

- Verses 8-12 – the key problem that is detailed here is one of pride and arrogance.

The Northern Kingdom is going to feel the full force of the Assyrians sweeping first King Rezin of Syria away and then they will be next – but they are saying ***READ Verse 10 ***

DISCIPLINARY LESSON 101 here is that to go far with God you need HUMILITY and NOT PRIDE – Pride was that think which from the earliest of times drew the devil himself into SIN and has done the same with us. As the Beatitudes tell us Matthew 5v3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit” – in other words “Cursed (not blessed) are those who are proud in heart!!”

- Verses 13-17 – the key problem here is in them being UNRESPONSIVE.

READ Verse 13 It is not that they have had no chances – but they have hardened their hearts, they have been stiff-necked and stubborn.

How like us that can be – we hear God saying something, our consciences are shouting out to us and yet still be FORGE AHEAD FULL SPEED against God’s will and way. We turn a blind eye to God things, we carefully avoid talking to people we know who will tell us the way of God – and why? Because we know what they will say and that they will not agree with us and the course we are

desperately, at all costs wanting to follow.

So there is nothing left, except to know the pain of God's judgment.

- Verses 18-21 – you get the sense here that there is a very self-focussed, self-centred wickedness going on here where everyone is out to get things for himself.

And this ultimately leads to a situation where we destroy ourselves. Self-seeking is self-destructive.

Our dependency should always be to the Lord – but when we turn our backs on God and start to look to our own sufficiency and our own selfish solutions, then we will fall into the pit that we have dug for ourselves.

- Verses 22-chapter 10v4 – This final section is probably the worst of all – the different sections seem to be have been getting graver and darker as they have gone along.

And here we meet the problem of social injustice. Those with the power, who are there to make good and just laws, laws that will reflect the heart of God – instead use their power to their own personal advantage and tread down those who are needy.

God never stands idly by in that situation. He never slumbers nor sleeps and he always hears the cry of the oppressed.

The opening 2 verses give us a catalogue of bad things that they are doing *** READ Verse1-2***

And then matching them in Verse 3 we have a trio of questions that relate to a coming day of reckoning:

*** READ Verse 3***

They ultimately leave themselves absolutely no room to manoeuvre.

READ Verse 4

Let me bring things around to a conclusion

CONCLUSION

God operates on the basis of his emotions – his zeal to accomplish things and where his zeal is rejected it is his righteous wrath that we must reckon with.

So we have the choice either learn to feel his emotions and get melted by his love and actions or we harden ourselves and have to finally reckon on facing his discipline and judgment – the choice is ours – lets be moved toward him, if we are not moved that way we will find ourselves moved away from him.

If we are not drawn toward him, inevitably we are drawn away. AMEN