

TCC Sunday 12th October 2014 – A new Servant, a new song, a new sense - Isaiah 42

Title: “A new Servant, a new song, a new sense”

Purpose: For us to become passionate worshippers of this new Servant and for us to consider whether we recognise that a new era has dawned with the coming of Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

First man on the moon /Mars

I was just nine years old when a **NEW ERA** dawned – the US astronaut Neil Armstrong took his first steps on the moon.

Just listening to the news in the week, it appears that yet another **NEW ERA** is about to arrive - *not* a man on the moon, but a man on Mars.

Whenever a NEW ERA dawns, whenever the announcement goes out there is an unspoken invitation that accompanies it for people to embrace it and to accept its implications.

First commercial airline flight 1914

It was 100 years ago that the very first commercial airline flight took place – the **1st of January 1914** when **Abram Pheil**, the former Mayor of St Petersburg, was the very first paying passenger on the AIRBOAT LINE. He flew across the bay from St Petersburg to Tampa, Florida taking 23 minutes.

Isaiah 42 – A NEW ERA - Getting the mood

Well this morning, as we come to Isaiah Chapter 42 we come to what you might call a NEW ERA.

Now It can be a real bonus, when you are studying a chapter of Scripture, if you can somehow get a clear sight of the **mood of the passage** early on.

And what better place than the very first verse or two – in fact in this case the very first word.

Verse 1 opens in the NIV with the word – **“HERE”** – “Here is my Servant...”.

And I would grant you – that it doesn’t sound too informative all in all – at least at first glance.

But if you have another bible version, perhaps an old Authorized Version, a New King James or perhaps an ESV, you will discover that they, along with the majority of Bible versions, start with the word:

- **BEHOLD** (or perhaps **LOOK**), with an appended exclamation mark for emphasis.
(This little word ‘hen’ (HANE), in the Hebrew, is what they call an INTERJECTION and depending on the context could get translated as: **Surely!, See!, Look!, Now!, Oh!** or the like – you get the general drift).

Now, if you were to just look back to the very last verse of the previous chapter, you would see that again this

word is the one that ALSO starts that verse as well – reading from the New American Standard Bible (NASB):

Isaiah 41 verse 29 **“BEHOLD**, all of them are false; Their works are worthless, Their molten images are wind and emptiness.”

And so now, as we turn over to the next chapter – we immediately are greeted with the sense of contrast, the sense of:

“Yes – all of their gods are false, all of their manufactured images they don’t add up to a hill of beans BUT **BEHOLD** → **“MY” SERVANT** – let me give you something that represents **a whole new ball game**.”

Some extra proof

Now you might be saying –“Well you sure did get ‘a lot out of a little’” (and I don’t want to overblow OR overstate anything).

So let me just back up my contention by simply pointing out that **twice in our chapter we get the notion of something NEW:**

- Verse 9 reads **“See, the former things have taken place, and NEW THINGS I declare.”**
- and then also Verse 10 **“Sing to the LORD A NEW SONG, his praise from the ends of the earth...”**

This chapter breaks down nice and easily and as the NIV bible (that we tend to use in this church) has it – there are 3 simple headed sections – and we are going to simply follow that breakdown under 2 headings and a conclusion:

- #1 – A new Servant (Verses 1-9)
- #2 – A new song (Verses 10-17)
- #3 – A new sense (Verses 18-25)

1] #1 - A new Servant (Verses 1-9)

I have to confess, and they say that confession is good for the soul, that when I’m tired at the end of the week, I like to watch a good old WHODUNNIT – a **Miss Marple**, or an episode of **Lewis** or the like – BUT this passage at its beginning is not so much a WHODUNNIT but a WHOISIT !!

Verse 1 **“Here is (or Behold) my Servant...”**

And very naturally we are interested to know who it is that Isaiah is pointing to – and we cannot just assume that the identification of a SERVANT in the singular is automatic or obvious because this term comes up no less than 25 times in this book.

Thus far in Isaiah, the term SERVANT or the NOTION OF SERVICE has been applied:

- to **Isaiah** – as God’s chosen prophet
- to **Israel** – as God’s chosen people

- to a foreign ruler like **Cyrus**— as God’s chosen conqueror

And so now we have a little detective work to do in order to ascertain which Servant this is that is being talked about and these opening 7 verses give us a PHOTOFIT PICTURE, if you like, **IN THE FORM OF A SONG** a piece of poetry.

And let me say once again – **POETRY IS GOOD.**

Q. Why do I say that?

- Well, **in general terms**, because God in His wisdom has chosen that medium to communicate quite a proportion of Holy Scripture.
- And, **in more specific terms**, because the rules and method of poetry foster and allow for the use of our imagination. The language that is used is heightened and more vivid.

So for example – instead of talking about people that are struggling – he talks of BRUISED REEDS- and immediately you can see in your mind’s eye a reed that is swaying back and forth in the wind, a reed that has a stalk that is threatening to break in half.

He talks about SMOLDERING WICKS that are right on the verge of snuffing out, people that will need some very close attention if that is not to be the end result.

The FIRST SERVANT SONG

This set of opening verses is known as the **FIRST SERVANT SONG** – there are generally considered to be FOUR of them – and, in fact, if this is a completely new idea to you (this notion of Servant Songs), you do actually know the LAST OF THE SERVANT SONGS – it comes at the end of Isaiah 52 and all of Isaiah 53 – it is that passage that gives us the clearest vision and picture of who this **Servant figure** is:

- “**He** was oppressed and afflicted, yet **he** did not open his mouth; **he** was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so **he** did not open his mouth.” (**Isaiah 53 verse 7**)
- “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on **him** the iniquity of us all.” (**Isaiah 53 verse 6**)

Unpacking this FIRST SERVANT SONG

Q. I don’t know if any of you like TUNA? Sometimes I will open a tin of this and mix in a little bit of mayonnaise and that will last me a few days for sandwiches – and the thing about TUNA is that they really do pack it into those tins.

And in a similar way there is a lot packed into this FIRST SERVANT SONG.

So let me try and UNPACK or DECOMPRESS this set of verses – and because there are quite a few aspects worth noticing I’m not going to spend a long time on any of them – BUT INSTEAD we will hopefully build up a kind of CUMULATIVE PICTURE:

- **Verse 1** – “... my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight, I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.”

We have one who is CHOSEN, one who is EQUIPPED or EMPOWERED with the Spirit of God and one who is a DELIGHT to God the Father:

Turn on your Bible Sonar and - Q. Don't you get a strong NT ECHO coming through? Jesus' baptism by John in the Jordan – (Matthew 3 verse 16&17) “As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw **the Spirit of God** descending like a dove and **lighting on him**. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am **well pleased**.”

- **Verse 2** – “He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets.”

We have a servant who is going to be decidedly UNOBTRUSIVE – this one will be hard to spot since he will not have any fanfare, in fact, he will positively take steps to avoid the limelight.

Q. Are you getting anything on your SONAR? What about **Matthew 12 (Verses 14-15)**

“...the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus. Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. Many followed him, and he healed all their sick, warning them not to tell who he was. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:” and then Matthew goes on to quote this verse in Isaiah.

- **Verse 3** – we mentioned it in passing – “A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out.”

I used to think that the references to the reed and the wick were self-references, references to the servant himself – but actually they are telling us about the nature of the ministry, the work, of this servant.

He will be the sort of person who will reach out to some of the weakest and the most needy.

He will be one who will not despise those who are the classic outcasts of society – the tax collectors, the prostitutes, those who are afflicted by demon possession, those that are unclean because of leprosy etc.

Verse 3 goes on “In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;” – I can't help but remember that occasion in **John 8** where **a woman caught in adultery** is rudely thrust before Jesus so that he can pronounce the death penalty on her, and yet, he does not shy away from faithfully administering **MERCY** as he lets her go and **JUSTICE** as he tells her to leave her life of sin.

- **Verse 4** – “he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands

will put their hope”.

This is the very first time that we get a hint that all will not be SMOOTH SAILING for this SERVANT.

“He will not falter or be discouraged...” – the talk from here on in Isaiah will not be just talk of a SERVANT but talk of a SUFFERING SERVANT.

(JUSTICE) – Notice that the word JUSTICE is one that comes up no less than 3 times (in Verse 1, 3 and 4) and so this is a KEY THREAD of the work of this servant.

Looking back to some of the earlier portraits that Isaiah paints – [Isaiah 9 verses 6-7](#) *READ* and then [Isaiah 11 Verses 1-5](#) *READ*.

These aspects start to make LINKAGES between the SERVANT and between this ANOINTED KING that Isaiah has been predicting.

- [Verse 6](#) – speaks of a COVENANT and more particularly that this Servant “will be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles.”

We are familiar with a number of covenants that God has put in place in the OT –

e.g. the covenant with Abraham - that all the nations would be blessed through him, through the seed of his line.

e.g. the covenant with David – that God would raise up one to be a King in the line of David and to rule for ever.

But here we seem to have something new – a new covenant. And not only something new but also a covenant that seems to somehow be more intimately connected with the person of this servant.

The further we go on in this FIRST SERVANT SONG – the more we realise that the OPENING BEHOLD! should really be accompanied by a great trumpet fanfare!!

Not only is this covenant going to somehow be more closely tied to the VERY PERSON OF THIS SERVANT but also the SCOPE OF THIS COVENANT is going to be much more universal – it “will be a covenant for the people **and a light for the Gentiles.**”

[Isaiah 49 and verse 6](#) solidifies the idea even more clearly: “...**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 you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.**”

- **One last aspect** – [Verse 7](#) – we get a glimpse of what the ministry of this servant will look like on the

ground: “to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.”

My sonar listening device takes me off to that passage at the outset of Jesus’ ministry there in Luke 4 where he is in his home town of Nazareth and he takes up the scroll of Isaiah and progressively unrolls it to what Jesus considers to be the best passage to define and explain what he and his ministry are all about – and he chooses the opening 2 verses of Isaiah 61 (by the way, some people believe that these verses are actually a FIFTH SERVANT SONG):

Luke 4 verse 17ff “The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to **preach good news to the poor**. He has **sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners** and **recovery of sight for the blind**, to **release the oppressed**, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”

Now we should just be clear here that the things that this servant is going to be effecting are not simply physical things – BECAUSE we know that Jesus according to the gospels never went and released anyone physically from prison.

Take John the Baptist – he was put into prison and Jesus never went to release him – in fact he waited until that time before he started his own ministry.

So therefore we realise that the outworking of God’s JUSTICE would be, in part, through the SPIRITUAL LIBERATION of all kinds of needy people.

As the passage says in Verse 9 “the former things have taken place, and NEW THINGS I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you.”

This was exactly the sort of thing that Jesus did – before he was arrested and put on a Roman cross – he told the disciples (3 times at separate occasions, distinctly and clearly).

Before Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day – he similarly let it be known to the disciples so that after the event they would realise that he had clearly told them that this would happen.

Q. Why is God in the habit of doing this? Q. In the habit of “advance announcement”?

Well it is so that our faith will be made all the stronger and that we would know that only God can know and predict things before they come to be.

Let’s now go on from **A NEW SERVANT** to #2:

2]#2 - A new song (Verses 10-17)

The points will get progressively quicker – they are SHORT – SHORTER – and a SHORT AND SHARP conclusion.

- If the FIRST SECTION had a lot to do with **JUSTICE**

then THIS SECTION has a lot to do with **JOY**

- If the FIRST SECTION had a lot to do with **HIGH & MIGHTY THEMES**
then THIS SECTION has a lot to do with **HIGH & MIGHTY PRAISE**

Ben Wiley and his Ecuador trip

I always love people getting “CARRIED AWAY” – I was speaking to an 18 year old on Wednesday night (following the Christian Institute presentation) and he was initially sitting away from everyone else and I went over to talk to him. We talked about his school life and he was very polite, and yes it was a nice chat – **AND THEN** - he told me that he was **planning to take a gap year before heading off to university and that he was hoping to go out to Ecuador** and spend some time exploring South America – and **you know immediately I could tell that now we had very clearly moved beyond the level of a general politeness – now he was EXCITED** and was very keen to talk about HIS HOPES and DREAMS for what the gap year was going to hold.

The apostle Paul does this a few times – I think of the end of Romans 11.

Paul has been working his way all through the inner workings of the great gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and his work of salvation and when he has got to the end of the theological part of this book of Romans – he breaks out into a SONG OF PRAISE – into a massive DOXOLOGY to God:

Romans 11 verse 33-36 “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable his judgments,
and his paths beyond tracing out!
34 “Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counsellor?”
35 “Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay him?”
36 For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be the glory forever! Amen.

And so this is what very naturally follows in this 2nd section of Isaiah 42.

- FIRST – we have news of a great servant communicated
- NOW – we have notice of a great song being commanded

Verse 10 “Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, you islands, and all who live in them.”

Q. Want joy in your life?

Q. Do you want a fresh dose of JOY in your life? – Well just spot where “God is at work”.

For a good example of this just flip over to **Isaiah 44 and Verses 21 through to 23** ***READ***

They are to remember & see afresh in their minds the way in which “God has been at work” – forgiving their sins and redeeming them – and then there will necessarily and spontaneously be an outpouring of ECSTATIC and JUBILANT PRAISE.

Revelation 5 verse 9ff ‘new song’ anticipated

This “NEW SONG” of Isaiah 42 anticipates the new song that will be sung in heaven - *READ* Revelation 5 verses 9ff.

3 things – praise, plurality & passion

If I had to state three things that this Song has from Verses 10-17 – I think I would choose – PRAISE, PLURALITY, PASSION:

- **#1 – PRAISE** – it’s completely unmissable – it’s everywhere from Verses 10 to 12

There’s rejoicing, voices are being raised, there’s lots of noise and joy.

- **#2 - PLURALITY** – it is not just one or two that are caught up in this PRAISE PARTY, no it is the deserts and the mountains – here it is Kedar and Sela – these were the mountainous regions just at the South of Israel where the Edomites and the Arabs lived.

It is very widespread praise – it has a great universal sweep.

- **#3 – PASSION** – We see that the LORD is described as BOTH a might warrior marching out with ZEAL and also as a pregnant woman who has come to her time to give birth and cannot keep back from delivering.

Verse 14 “For a long time I have kept silent, I have been quiet and held myself back. But now, like a woman in childbirth, I cry out, I gasp and pant.

15 I will lay waste the mountains and hills and dry up all their vegetation; I will turn rivers into islands and dry up the pools.

16 I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth.

These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.”

God is VERY EXCITED – He is TOTALLY PASSIONATE about the work of Redemption that His SERVANT is going to achieve. “These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.”

Verse 17 transitions us back to REALITY for a moment – not, of course that we have been “tripping” in some other world of “UNREALITY”. No! It is just that not all react, not all respond as they should.

Verse 17 reads “But those who trust in idols, who say to images, ‘You are our gods,’ will be turned back in utter

shame.”

If it were only the unbelieving pagan nations God had in view here, then perhaps we would not have so much to concern us – but the next section shows us that the problem of UNBELIEF is so much closer to home.

A NEW SERVANT

A NEW SONG

Finally, by way of conclusion:

3] #3 - A new sense (Verses 18-25)

The final section opens with what could only be described as a STINGING REBUKE – a very definite WAKE-UP CALL!

And all along we are to allow the very wonder of this NEW SERVANT and this NEW SONG to saturate us and to sink deep into our dry and perhaps hard-baked souls.

And to consider our own REACTION or LACK OF REACTION.

You see this section is powerful because it is just such a huge ANTI-CLIMAX.

Verse 18 opens with: “Hear you deaf; look, you blind, and see!”

He says to them **5 THINGS** in short order:

- He says Verse 19 – “**YOU HAVE THE CONNECTION**” – you, the people of Israel, are **connected to me**, you have that **privileged title of SERVANT** as well, **you have the honoured role as MESSENGER** to the nations.

BUT - YOU ARE BLIND & DEAF!
- He says Verse 20 – “**YOU HAVE THE CAPACITY**” – you have seen many things, your ears are open.

BUT - YOU HEARD NOTHING & PAID NO ATTENTION!
- He says Verse 21 – “**YOU HAVE THE DATA**” – ‘It pleased the LORD...to make his law great and glorious.’

BUT - YOU ARE A PEOPLE PLUNDERED & LOOTED (a reference to what the Babylonians did to them)
- He says Verse 23 – “**YOU HAVE THE INVITATION**” – ‘Which of you will listen to this or pay close attention...’

BUT (Verse 24) - THEY WOULD NOT FOLLOW HIS WAYS
- He says Verse 25 – “**YOU HAVE THE DISCIPLINE UPON YOU!**” – ‘So he poured out on them his burning anger, the violence of war. It enveloped them in flames, yet they did not understand; it consumed them, but they did not take it to heart.’

Isaiah brings out **THE BOTTOM LINE** in Verse 24 “...Was it not the LORD, against whom **we** sinned?
(Note: he includes himself in that) For they would not follow his ways; they did not obey his law.”

CONCLUSION

THIS MORNING:

We’ve had **the mouth-watering portrait** of this NEW & TRUE SERVANT
We’ve seen **the watching and waiting world responding** with UNABASHED JOY
We’ve seen **the eager passion of the Redeemer** bursting forth to save HIS OWN

Q. So are we part of the **CHORUS** (Singing the NEW SONG)
OR are we part of the **ANTI-CLIMAX** (still stone deaf & savagely blind to the NEW SERVANT - Jesus)?

Oh that you would make every one of us ALIVE to this **NEW DAY**
ALIVE to this **NEW SALVATION**
ALIVE to **Resurrection life** though the death of this **NEW SERVANT JESUS**.

A NEW SERVANT – Yes

A NEW SONG – Yes

Q. A “new sense” on your heart? Q. Is that the case for you?

OR

IS IT JUST “**A NUISANCE**”!!!!

Let us pray ... AMEN