

10 April 2022 Isaiah 50:4-9a Palm Sunday Pastor Fraser Pearce

The people of Jesus time were expecting the Messiah:
They were expecting that the true Son of David would arise
Who would bring peace and justice, and who would reign forever.
They were also aware that the prophet Isaiah had spoken of a Suffering Servant,
Who would bring healing and restoration for the people
Through his humble and steadfast faithfulness
In the face of shame, scorn, suffering, and humiliation.
What they didn't realise, what no one realised,
What *we* couldn't have guessed unless it was revealed to us by God,
Is that the true Son of David, and the Suffering Servant prophesied by Isaiah,
Are the same person: the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today I'm proclaiming Good News from Isaiah:
That our Lord Jesus Christ, who *is* true the Son of David,
And who lives and reigns for us in majesty and power,
He is the one who was the Suffering Servant *for us*,
Who was willing to bear shame and humiliation
In order to bring us to life with God.

Before we hear the reading from Isaiah,
Let's go back and hear what God's word has to say about David's Son,
And how what it says can help us make sense of today's *Gospel* reading.

Back in 2 Samuel we read that King David,
Having secured the throne, and made Jerusalem the capital,
Decides that it would be good to move from having a tabernacle,
-From having a *tent* as the location of the ark of the covenant
And the place to receive God's gracious presence in worship-
He decides that it would be good to build a house, a temple for God.

Well, the same night that the prophet Nathan
Gives David the green light on the project,
He is given words by God: God tells David through Nathan
That it is not *David* who will be build a house for *God*,
But that *God* who would build a house, a royal house, for *David*.
And as the key part of the message God gives David

This great Messianic promise: **Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.** 2 Samuel 7

It was because of this promise that God's people
Had the expectation of the Messiah, the anointed one,
The true King and Son of David
Whose throne would be established forever.

This Messianic expectation is at work in the Gospel reading today,
Where the people give Jesus a royal welcome
In the city established by David as the capital.

This is what we read there: **As [Jesus] rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, 'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!**

Peace in heaven,

and glory in the highest heaven!'

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, order your disciples to stop.' He answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.' Luke 19

Blessed is *the King*, the long-expected Son of David

Who comes to set his people free.

Jesus' own disciples, rightly thought that the time had arrived for Jesus

To bring the restoration of justice, to bring the freedom

To bring in the everlasting kingdom that only the Messiah could inaugurate.

What they didn't realise,

What they *could not understand before the resurrection,*

Was that the kingdom that Jesus was coming to inaugurate

Was one that is established through suffering and death,

Through his sacrifice of atonement for sins,

And through resurrection into a life with God

That comes through trust in the Gospel message.

In fact after the resurrection, when the risen Christ appears to his disciples,

We hear these words: **Then [Jesus] said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.** Luke 24

Did you notice, by the way,
That Jesus said to his disciples that his own suffering, death, and resurrection,
Are attested to in the Scriptures, in what we would call the Old Testament,
And that Jesus himself opens their minds to understand how the Old Testament
Is about *him*, and especially about the events that his disciples
Had witnessed in that great holy week?

This takes us to the Isaiah reading for today,
Which is one of the great Suffering Servant songs from that book.

Listen to how it begins:

**The Lord GOD has given me
the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.
Morning by morning he wakens—
wakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.**

Here we as Christians understand that our Lord is presented
As one who is obedient to the word of the Father,
That he came not to do his own will, but the will of the one who sent him.
It is because the will of the Lord Jesus and his Father are the same
That Jesus’ word has power to sustain us when we are weary,
When we feel that the path of discipleship is too hard to walk.

What is surprising in the prophecy of Isaiah
Is that the one who is faithful to God lives out this fidelity,
Not in being honoured by the people and in having an easy life,
But in his willing acceptance of suffering and humiliation
At the hands of sinful people.

This is how the prophecy goes on:

**The Lord GOD has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backwards.
I gave my back to those who struck me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;
I did not hide my face
from insult and spitting.**

As Christian people we hear these words
And know that they are speaking about Jesus:
We have the image in our minds of the mockery of our Lord
By the soldiers, by the leaders of the people,
Even by one of the criminals condemned with him.

In Luke's Gospel we hear that Jesus knew what his path would be.
In chapter 9 of the Gospel, Jesus repeatedly foretells
Of the rejection and suffering that he would face in Jerusalem,
In the city established by David as the capital of his kingdom.

In chapter 9 we also read these words,
Which mark a kind of turning point in the narrative,
Where the future direction of Jesus' path becomes clear:

When the days drew near for [Jesus] to be taken up, [Jesus] set his face to go to Jerusalem.

Immediately this *setting of his face* to Jerusalem brings opposition,
Listen to the next words: **And he sent messengers ahead of him.**

-this is similar to the preparation involved in today's Gospel,
And signals to us that Jesus was in charge and knew his path.

On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; but they did not receive him, because his face was set towards Jerusalem. When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, 'Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?' But he turned and rebuked them. Then they went on to another village. Luke 9

Jesus' path to Jerusalem is not for the condemnation of those who oppose him,
But to bring them to repentance and the forgiveness of sins.

With this in mind, listen to how the prophecy of Isaiah goes on:

**The Lord GOD helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,**

**and I know that I shall not be put to shame;
he who vindicates me is near.**

Who will contend with me?

Let us stand up together.

Who are my adversaries?

Let them confront me.

It is the Lord GOD who helps me;

who will declare me guilty?

Jesus set his face to Jerusalem, to his suffering and death *for us*,
To his taking on sin and shame *for us*,
And to his resurrection from the dead *for us*,
To bring us into his kingdom,
Where he, the once suffering servant,
Is exalted at the right hand of the Father,
And where he lives and reigns as the true Son of David,
Whose kingdom is established forever.

No one imagined that the Messiah, the Son of David,
Would be the Suffering Servant, by whose stripes we are healed.
Jesus' disciples did not anticipate this, and we would not have either.
This is God's revelation to us of who he is,
And of his great love for us.
And so, as we enter into this holy week, let's put aside distractions,
And focus our attention on Christ,
On his humiliation, suffering, and death,
And on his resurrection, his victory over death and the grave,
Because he is the suffering servant,
Who establishes an everlasting kingdom,
And who brings us to be with him where he is,
As we commend ourselves to him.
In Jesus' name. Amen