

The unexpected Jesus (Isaiah 52)

Introduction

Good morning everyone. It's Palm Sunday! The day when we celebrate Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem with palm branches and songs of praise!

But beyond the outward celebrations there was a lot going on. The people of Jerusalem were expecting a military hero who would overthrow the Roman occupation and establish a new Kingdom. But Jesus had a different agenda - he was there to save them from their sins, not from their political situation.

Today I want to talk to you about **The unexpected Jesus**.

Many times in my life, I have found myself surprised by Jesus. On Palm Sunday, he is the King that comes riding in on a Donkey. If it was one of us, let's be honest, we would be hoping for a limousine and the appropriate fanfare! Angel trumpets sounding and red carpet rolled out!

But Jesus has never been what we expected. From his birth in a manger, to his death on a cross, Jesus shatters all our ideas of greatness.

When Jesus entered the temple, the day after his entry into Jerusalem, those who had welcomed him probably expected something big to happen in the temple. Perhaps Jesus would announce the beginning of his kingship in the temple, that would be expected! Perhaps he was going to raise up an army to oust the Romans. Perhaps something even more amazing!

But nobody would have expected Jesus to do what he actually did in the Temple. There, in the holy place of God, in the center of Jewish religion, Jesus drove out the people who were selling sacrificial animals and overturned the tables of the money changers who enabled foreign visitors to purchase sacrifices. In effect, Jesus shut down the operation of the Temple. How shocking this must have been to all, even Jesus' closest followers.

But Jesus said that the temple was meant to be a 'house of prayer' and not a 'den of thieves.' In context, this phrase revealed that the Jewish people had been thinking that they were safe from God's judgment because they could "hide out" in the Temple, even though they were violating God's law. Jesus then said, that God would destroy the temple!

Jesus's unexpected actions and explanation no doubt distressed those who supported Jesus.

Even today, when we seek to take Jesus seriously, he does the unexpected. Sometimes this happens as we wrestle with his words and see something that we have overlooked before. Sometimes this happens as Jesus, through the Spirit, calls us out of our comfort zone and into risky discipleship. Sometimes he says things

that challenge us deeply. In these and so many other ways, Jesus overturns our expectations.

I invite you to turn with me to the book of Isaiah, 700 years before Jesus came, to chapter 52, verses 7-15. In today's passage, we find an unexpected message that has been proclaimed throughout the ages.

I've got four points today! First one;

Unexpected Hope (Is 52:7)

Take a look with me at Isaiah 52, verse 7;

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

Unexpected hope.

As I am sure that by now, in our Isaiah series, you know that for Israel, it was not a good time. They had hit rock bottom. Their situation looked hopeless to them. Many of their family and friends had been killed. The survivors had been captured and exiled to Babylon. They were separated from family and their homeland. Their precious Jerusalem and the Temple, the place that represented God's presence and power with them, had been destroyed. Was there any hope left?

Have you every been in a situation where you wondered if you would ever celebrate again? If there was a way out, and if hope and joy could ever return?

God speaks through Isaiah speaks today, to the idea, that hope can be a powerful force in the face of adversity. God teaches us that even when life is tough, we can cling to the hope that God has a plan for us, and that redemption is possible.

In this verse, Isaiah says; **How beautiful on the mountains...** Every time I'm in the mountains, I am amazed at how much they proclaim the glory of God. Yesterday a few of us hiked up to the top of table mountain. It was beautiful. But as beautiful as the mountains are, do you know what they don't do? They don't proclaim the gospel.

As much as those mountains shout the greatness of God, they say nothing about the son of God. Jesus who came to save us from our sins. That's a privilege that's reserved for you and me. You and I have the privilege of doing what even beautiful mountains can't do. We have the privilege of bringing the good news, the greatest news in the world that people can be forgiven of all their sins, and reconciled to a relationship with God through Jesus.

But this verse says something unexpected... How beautiful are... **the feet!** Let me just say, feet are the last thing I would consider beautiful!

Now I know, some of you... may have some weird kind of foot fetish. If that's you. We will have some prayer counsellors available after the service to help you :)

But for the most of us, us 'normal' people, feet are gross! Right?! All those weird little toes, some of us even have little creepy hairs growing out like hobbits!

Isaiah does not say, like we might expect, how lovely are the lips, or how beautiful is the voice that brings good news. No. He says; **how beautiful on the mountains... are the feet!**

Jokes aside. The expression is obviously lost in our culture. But even in eastern cultures, feet are a rather vulgar part of the body. Feet are dirty from the filth of the world. In ancient times, feet had callouses and sores. When Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, it was an act of service, reserved for the lowest of servants. His disciples were like. You can't wash out feet! But Jesus said, unless I wash you, you can have no part with me. Un-expected-Jesus.

But even here in Isaiah, Isaiah says that it is impossible for messengers of hope to have ugly feet! Isaiah says; messengers of hope, that come from afar, that travel across mountains to bring good news, who announce peace, happiness, salvation, and that God reigns, he says they are beautiful.

Yesterday, after our group came down the mountain, I don't think our feet were very beautiful afterwards – smelly and sore might be more accurate!

But the feet of the person who comes from far to bring amazing news – those are some beautiful feet.

Israel was in a bad place – literally far away from home in a foreign land – but also spiritually – they were spiritually depressed and without hope.

Yet God tells them that there is good news coming – a message of hope, peace and salvation. A message that God is in control and reigns.

How about you – do you see hope on the horizon? Easter is a wonderful reminder to us that God's good news of salvation is there for us. We are not without hope and a future, even if today things do not feel great. Easter is a reminder that our God reigns.

So my friend, are you a messenger of hope? Who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings good tidings, who proclaims salvation, who says; "My God reigns!

Let me share a story with you from this past week of one of our senior ladies who I called upon to help with a need. Someone in our church approached me about a lady who was going through a lot. She had experienced deep personal grief and was not in our church, but she wanted to speak to a Christian counsellor. So I connected her with one of our senior ladies in our church. I left them to connect, and just yesterday I received this feedback. After sharing God's plan of salvation with her, the counsellor led this lady to Jesus. She told me that the lady prayed a very sincere prayer of repentance and asking the Lord into her life! Isn't that wonderful! Praise the Lord. That is sharing the message of hope!

Anyone can do it!

Friends, are your feet beautiful?

You see, God and the world each have a very different view of beauty. Which will you pursue? Will you spend time on worldly beauty? Or will you spend time on being beautiful in the eyes of God?

God's definition of beauty, is that those who are messengers of the gospel. To God, they are lovely, from the top of their head, to the very soles of their strange little feet! Amen?! Hallelujah!

You and I have this hope in our hearts! So let's share it.

So, I pray this for every single one of you listening to this right now... Father... Please, make out feet beautiful, because we're bringing good news. Use us. God, use me. Use others who are listening to this to publish peace to the world around them. To publish salvation today, that others might see your glory in ways that nothing in creation could even begin to compare with, because they've heard the gospel through our lives, through our lips. Today we pray in Jesus name, Amen.

First point - Unexpected hope. Second point;

Unexpected Worship. (Is 52:8-9)

On Thursday evening we had the blessing of hosting the founder of Next Level Worship here at King of Kings. He is just a normal guy, who God has used internationally to train thousands of worship leaders.

Dwayne carries a heart to teach people, that worship is more than music. It is our whole lives, given as a sacrifice to the Lord.

In Isaiah, even though God's people were facing the darkest time in their lives, this passage describes something very unexpected.

Look with me at verse 8;

8 Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the LORD returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes. 9 Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem.

Unexpected worship.

Friends, worship is not just for the mountaintops. Worship in the valley. Worship in the waiting. Worship in the suffering. Worship in the pain.

Despite their circumstances, Isaiah says, God is moving, a message of hope is being proclaimed, and news of it is spreading. And when the Lord returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes!

They will burst into songs to joy together! Even in the ruins, they will burst into worship, for the Lord has redeemed and comforted his people.

Friends, no matter what you are going through. Keep worshipping. Don't let your heart get cold. When we truly see who God is, and what he has done, it will overflow with worship. For the Lord has redeemed us. Amen?

Unexpected worship.

Point number 3.

Unexpected Deliverance (Is 52:10-12)

I have been privileged to witness God setting people free from all kinds of struggles. Deliverance from sin. Deliverance from addictions. Deliverance from oppression. Deliverance from strongholds. The look of surprise sometimes on peoples faces, when they are set free, is priceless!

I remember after praying for one young adult, who had been tormented by some kind of oppression by the enemy, he just looked at me in shock, and kept saying things like, I feel so different, so much lighter! I never realised how much the enemy had a hold on me. That is the power of Jesus.

Isaiah says in verse 10;

¹⁰ The LORD will lay bare his holy arm...

I love this. This metaphor is taken from warriors, who made bare the arm for battle, and the sense is, that God had come to the rescue of his people just like a warrior, that had rolled up his sleeves, and was going to fight for them. What a incredible picture. The battle is the Lords. The Lord will lay bare his holy arm...

in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

Isaiah says God will do this in the sight of all the nations. The world will see what God can do. The gospel proclaims liberty to those bound with fears.

Father, let those weary and heavy laden under the burden of sin, find their relief in Jesus Christ, lay bare your mighty holy arm, and set them free, take men and women, and shake them free from the dust and dirt of their doubts and fears. Deliver them from the strongholds of the enemy, through the price paid by your son, Jesus Christ. He has overcome. He has redeemed us, not with silver or gold, or corruptible things, but his own precious blood. Thank you Jesus for your deliverance!

But we also need to remember - we need to walk out our deliverance! verse 11;

¹¹ Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing! Come out from it and be pure, you who carry the articles of the LORD's house. ¹² But you will not leave in haste or go in flight; for the LORD will go before you, the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

It is so sad to see people who are set free, and then return to the sin that entangles them. God warns us through Isaiah, that we need to walk out our deliverance.

We have to come out from that stuff that used to hold us in bondage, and to be pure, remembering that it is not through our own acts of righteousness, but through the righteousness of Jesus that we are saved, but we still need to keep ourselves clean from the pollutions of the world.

When walk in this way, we will be at peace, because the Lord will go before us, and the Lord will be our rear guard.

Unexpected hope.

Unexpected worship.

Unexpected deliverance.

Final point today;

Unexpected Sacrifice. (Is 52:13-15)

This next section is so powerful, because it is a prophetic promise about Jesus, 700 years before his birth! Over easter weekend, we are going to look at chapter 53, which builds on this, but I want to focus on just the next few verses today. Verse 13;

¹³ See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. ¹⁴ Just as there were many who were appalled at him — his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness— ¹⁵ so he will sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.

Unexpected sacrifice.

As Christians, we can very quickly take our focus off Jesus and the cross, and build our lives around lot's of other things, but God wants us to keep our focus on Jesus.

(Hold up bible)

Friends, I want you to know that this book is all about Jesus! And God wants us to consider what his message to us is all about. When life gets hard, we go to the book that God wrote. God wants us to receive and consider the whole book, not just pieces of it, and he wants us to connect all of Scripture to Jesus and his sacrifice.

Here in Isaiah 52—written 700 years before the birth of Jesus, it shows us how God promised his coming, his death on the cross, and his resurrection!

There are a few different ways to view this book. Some people would say that this is a book of great advice. It's not. Yes, of course there is some great advice in here, but that's not the primary purpose of the book. If it's primarily filled with great advice, then the book is about you and me, but the book is not about you and me. The book is for you and me, but it's about Jesus!

This is really really important, because you can pick up the bible, and you can just read it for good advice, instead of good news. You can think it's about you and not about Jesus and get some moral truisms to live a more ethical life, and one day you will die, and you may spend an eternity separated from God, because you're not

even a Christian. You're just treating this like a psychology manual or a self-help book, or bit of ancient wisdom for daily living, but it's so much more than that.

It's a book that God wrote about Jesus Christ. It's not a book about Abraham. It's not a book about Noah. It's not a book about David. It's a book about Jesus. Yes, the cast of characters includes Abraham, and Noah, and David. But it's not about them.

So, when God tells Abraham, "All the nations will be blessed through your descendant," that descendant is Jesus. When Noah builds an ark and saves multitudes of people from death, it's actually a picture of what Jesus would come and do for more people to a greater degree, that he would save us not just from death, but from eternal death.

When David slays Goliath, the story is not, "and here's some moral truisms - You can slay your giants! - You can have victory over life's big challenges!" The real story, is that David came from a family line, and Jesus is from the line of David, and David was the one that nobody would've expected to be the warrior. And Jesus comes like that, the unexpected carpenter, and saves the world. David slays a giant, and Jesus conquers Satan! Jesus is infinitely bigger and better than David!

So just by way of analogy, I'm trying to illustrate for you, this book is about Jesus, and all the people, and all the stories, and all the principles, are ultimately part of the subplot connecting to the big storyline - that we are sinners - and Jesus comes as our Saviour. And the bible doesn't make any sense unless it's all connected to Jesus.

This is exactly what Jesus repeatedly, and clearly taught.

In the New Testament, in Luke chapter 22, Jesus actually refers back to these verses in Isaiah 52 and 53. He says in Luke, that these scriptures, 700 years previously, would be fulfilled in him. What was Jesus saying? He was saying that this whole book was being and would be fulfilled in his life. He was saying, I am here fulfilling everything that is written in the book that God wrote. That's huge! That's unexpected!

Jesus was so close to his crucifixion, to his death, to his burial, and his resurrection, and he knew this was all according to a plan. It was all according to scripture. He was the fulfilment of the eternal plan of God that was working itself out in history.

Next weekend over Easter, we are going to look at Isaiah chapter 53. That is the final part of thing lengthy proclamation by the Holy Spirit through Isaiah about the coming of Jesus. It's the crowning culmination. It's the massive fireworks explosion at the end of this amazing, magnificent section!

But today, as we focus on the time around Palm Sunday, Jesus knew he was on his way to his death, and what he has in his mind is scripture. And this is so helpful for us, to know the Word of God, to trust the Word of God, to memorise the Word of God, so that we can recall it in seasons of testing and suffering, like Jesus did.

The whole context here in Isaiah, from Isaiah chapter 40 all the way through to chapter 66 - is the humble servant. It is all speaking about God the Father sending a servant, into human history, to serve us. And it's written 700 years before Jesus was even born.

Some of you might be listening, and you're thinking, "I don't even know if I believe the Bible. I don't know if I trust the Bible." I've been there. I heard what other people have said about the Bible. So, what I want to do, is I want to give to you a gift from the Lord from the scriptures.

As we unpack this prophetic promise, of Isaiah 52 today, and 53 today and over easter - I am praying that God will use this to bring you to a deeper faith, a firm conviction, that this is in fact, a book that God inspired, because no one would know future history in this kind of detail.

Just look back to verse 13; "**See,**" God says. "**My servant—**" Again, God is sending into human history his servant, who will what? **act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.**

When did that happen for Jesus? When was he high and lifted up? On the cross. On the cross. In the book of Luke, he quotes this section of Isaiah on his way to the cross. Verse 14;

14 Just as there were many who were appalled at him — his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness.

How did we treat this incredible servant of God? We beat him. We make him bleed. Jesus was beaten by a mob, swollen, bloodied, beard plucked-out, which was disgrace in the ancient world.

The Bible says then he was then scourged, where the flesh was ripped off his body. He was left a bloodied mess. Had you known Jesus before, and then seen him being crucified, you would not have recognised him. He didn't even look like the same man, just a swollen, broken, beaten, absolutely crushed, destroyed man. That's what we did to the servant of God.

Isaiah goes on and says; "**So shall he sprinkle many nations.**"

Simply incredible. We know from scripture, that the wages for sin is death, and sin requires death. The way this was done in the Old Testament, is that the high priest, as the mediator between God and his people, would offer a sacrifice, and that animal would be a substitute for the sinful people, and the blood would be shed in place of their sin, and then the blood would be sprinkled. And what he's saying, is the blood of this servant is would be sprinkled in our place for our sin. That's the Bible's language for atonement.

This is the unexpected, incredible sacrifice of Jesus for us.

Look at this final verse 15; **and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.**

What he's talking about here, is that Jesus would come unlike all other kings and all other rulers and all other leaders. See, Jesus came to serve, not be served. He came to give, not to take. He came to love. He came to forgive. He came to bless. He came to serve. He came giving himself away as a gift. He came to sacrifice.

So, why would this happen? Why would God come as a servant? Why would God come humbly, and simply, and poorly? Why would he do that? Why did that happen? "For" this reason.

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. (John 15:13)

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. (1 Corinthians 15:3)

You see church, the Bible uses this word 'for' a lot, to tell us that Jesus came and served us, by suffering and dying, and he did it all for us. He never sinned, and we've all sinned, and he suffered as our substitute, paying the penalty for sin, which is death.

Unexpected hope.
Unexpected worship.
Unexpected deliverance.
Unexpected sacrifice.

Have you experienced the unexpected Jesus?

Do you sense that, even now, Jesus is calling you to something that you had not anticipated? How are you responding to him?

PRAYER

Father God, thank you so much for your plan to save sinners. Lord Jesus, thank you for being that servant, that suffering, saving servant Son.

Lord Jesus, even as you spoke and acted in such unexpected ways when you entered Jerusalem and its Temple, so you have done in my life.

Perhaps the most unexpected of all, is my experience of your grace. This is nothing I ever deserved or would think to receive. Thank you!

You have taken my life in unexpected directions. Some of them I have welcomed. With others I have dragged my feet. But, as I look back on my life, I can see how you have been mercifully and wondrously guiding me. Thank you!

Lord, I confess that I like to have you “figured out,” as if this were possible! Help me to be open to who you really are, and what you really want to say to me.

May I be ready to embrace the unexpected, as you surprise me with your vision and grace. Amen!

God bless you everyone.

Credits: David Platt, Mark Driscoll.

Small Group Questions:

When have you experienced the unexpected Jesus?

Do you sense that, even now, Jesus is calling you to something that you had not anticipated? How are you responding? Why?