

**Preaching Christ....  
...by the power of the Holy Spirit  
...and the authority of the Word of God**

**Date:** 17 September 2023  
**Services:** *Across the Diocese*  
**Series:** All about Jesus  
**Title:** Major prophets  
**Books:** Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel  
**READING:** Isaiah 53:1-6

**Outline**

1. **The promise of a Saviour**
2. **Sin remembered no more**
3. **God will shepherd his people**

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**INTRODUCTION**

- *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] explained to [] what was said in all the Scriptures concerning **himself**.* Luke 24:27
- And that is what we've seen through this series isn't?
- Just **HOW** the Old Testament – speaks to us of **Jesus**.
- But I made a mistake when I put the series together... in that I hadn't allocated a week on what is known as the **Major Prophets**.... Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations Ezekiel and Daniel.
- But as it turns out – showing you some key passages from these amazing books, is actually **GREAT** way to finish our series... as they so **clearly** point to **Jesus**. //
- These prophets, brought God's **will** and **word** to bear on both the **northern** and **southern Kingdoms** of Israel
- So **Isaiah** - Approximately 740-681 BC - spoke both to the **north** and the **south** – hoping that the **southern** kingdom would learn from the **northern** kingdom's **exile**... They didn't – but there's hope of a future restoration.
- **Jeremiah** - Approximately 626-586 BC – he calls for repentance, and warns of impending judgment by Babylon – which he himself then actually witnessed and caught up by.
- **Ezekiel** ministered **during** the exile – **from** exile – to show God's people how they landed themselves in this situation - from 593-571 BC. He received visions from God regarding the reasons for exile, the impending **destruction** of **Jerusalem**, and a future **restoration of Jerusalem**.
- So those are the three we're going to concentrate on today.
- So with that brief overview, let me show you where we are heading today...
  1. **The promise of a Saviour - Isaiah**
  2. **Sin remembered no more - Jeremiah**
  3. **God will shepherd his people - Ezekiel**

**1. THE PROMISE OF A SAVIOUR**

- At least two passages in Isaiah point us to the Saviour's birth. Both will be familiar to you –
- Isaiah 7:14 *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a*

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*son, and will call him Immanuel.*

- Matthew tells us Jesus will be called 'Emmanuel' – which means – God with us.
- Then Isaiah 9 – do you recall? - *"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder... Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end... He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.*
- Here is this astonishingly huge picture... of a **child** – and yet a **King**...
- A **Son**, but with the **government** on his **shoulder**.
- Reigning on David's **throne** and over his **kingdom**, - but with **justice** and in **righteousness**... for **ever!** //
- But it is in **Isaiah 53**, that we come to one of Isaiah's most well-known and deeply moving passages....
- The description of the servant who will die for his people – who is, of course, Jesus.
- The whole chapter is pertinent, but let me just read vv 4-6...

*Surely he took up our pain  
and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
stricken by him, and afflicted.  
<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,  
and by his wounds we are healed.  
<sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the LORD has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.*

- All of this - 700 years before Christ!
- **But it is so very clear – that it was His life for ours**
- Jesus **pierced** and **crushed** for our **sin**
- **His** punishment winning our **peace** with **God**
- **His** wounds resulting in the **healing** of our **relationship** with **God!!**
- .....because Jesus died for us – **because** he was **pierced** for our **transgression**... and our **iniquity** was laid on him....
- Then what follows is the glorious invitation in ch 55
- *Seek the LORD while he may be found;  
call on him while he is near.  
<sup>7</sup> Let the wicked forsake their ways  
and the unrighteous their thoughts.  
Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*
- He **can** have mercy on us, **because** judgement fell on Jesus....
- And so to Isaiah 65 where we see this amazing picture of the new creation

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- *“See, I will create  
new heavens and a new earth.*
- *No longer will they build houses and others live in them,  
or plant and others eat.  
<sup>23</sup> They will not labour in vain,  
for they will be a people blessed by the LORD,  
they and their descendants with them.*
- That will be seen finally fulfilled when Jesus returns and described in very similar ways in Revelation 21...!
- Do you recall? *Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,”<sup>[a]</sup> ... “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.*
- Isaiah has much to say in **judgement** – both of God’s people and surrounding nations... but it is never devoid of **hope**... a **child** is born, a **King is coming**, a **suffering** servant who will bear the **sin** of his **people**, an **invitation** to come find **mercy**, and a promise of a **new heavens and earth**... Praise **God!**
- No wonder Jesus was able to show his disciples how the Scriptures spoke of himself!

**2. SIN REMEMBERED NO MORE - JEREMIAH**

- There are so many parts of **Jeremiah** I’d love to share with you... but let me take you to Jeremiah 31:31ff where the Lord – through Jeremiah – teaches about a new covenant.
- God had made **covenants** – **agreements** with his people – with **Abraham** – with the nation of **Israel**...
- Covenants in the ancient world were often ratified with the sprinkling of blood. The **Old Covenant** – as mediated through **Moses** was confirmed by this **means** – in **Exodus 24:8**
- But God’s people had spectacularly **failed** to keep their side of the **agreement**.
- So the prophet Jeremiah teaches in chapter 31
- *“The days are coming,” declares the LORD,  
“when I will make a new covenant  
with the people of Israel  
and with the people of Judah.  
....because they broke my covenant,  
though I was a husband to<sup>[d]</sup> them,<sup>[e]</sup>”  
declares the LORD.*
- Can you hear the sadness in the Lord’s words?
- Like when there’s a divorce in your family – or perhaps you’ve been through... Israel broke the covenant with God even though he had looked after them... been faithful to his promises...
- So there will now be a **NEW** covenant...
- Here is how it is described:  
<sup>33</sup> *“I will put my law in their minds  
and write it on their hearts.  
I will be their God,  
and they will be my people.*

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- Can you imagine a setting where God's law is in our hearts... that is – we obey from our heart... there's a willingness... and an ability to do the will of God?
  - When will this be?
  - ultimately – in the new creation...
  - Yet we know it in **part** know as God's Holy Spirit goes to work on our heart... bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit...! *love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*
  - God's work in our hearts... you see... his will within...!
  - We have a **foretaste** of **heaven** now...
  - But there's more
  - <sup>34</sup> *No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD.*
  - Everyone **knowing** the Lord... again – **when**?
  - In the **new creation**... For only those who know and love and trust him will be in the new creation...
  - but again – we have foretaste of that in our church gatherings today – where everyone knows and loves the Lord and we experience deep connection with God and with one another...
  - Next:  
*"For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."*
  - Ahhhh – THAT's why we will be so connected – with God and with one another – because sin will have been dealt with – removed.
  - Do you recall Jesus' words at the Lord's Supper...?
  - ....this is my blood of the new covenant – ***poured out for the forgiveness of sins...***
  - **THIS** how this prophecy in Jeremiah was **fulfilled**...
  - **The new covenant – ratified by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ!**
  - What a wonderful vision and promise from the Lord through the prophet **Jeremiah**... ///
  - So that brings us to the last major prophet I want to introduce to you today...
- 3. GOD WILL SHEPHERD HIS PEOPLE - EZEKIEL**
- Perhaps you'd turn with me to Ezekiel 34...
  - <sup>2</sup> *"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?"*
  - the shepherds of Israel were their elders – their leaders.
  - And they had neglected their job... walked away from it... putting the sheep – the people of Israel – in danger!

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- So the Lord turns to the shepherds and says because you cared for yourselves, rather than the flock - <sup>10</sup> *This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves.*
- *“For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. <sup>12</sup> As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep.*
- And what follows in those beautiful verses – Ezekiel 34:12-16 - , Is God’s promise to shepherd his people, to bind the injured, to look for the lost, to feed his people, to look after them – to shepherd his people with justice.
- Isn’t that a **beautiful description**?
- **God** shepherding his people... tenderly **caring** for them – **providing** for them... a place to lay down – a place to feed in rich **pasture**.... The **injured**, the **weak**... looked **after**.... And **justice** done....
- Remind you of something?
- **The Lord is my shepherd – I shall not want...**
- AND of course John 10 // – **Jesus** – the **Good Shepherd** who lays down his life for the **sheep**...
- ...ALL this from **Ezekiel**, is ultimately and wonderfully fulfilled **in** and by **Jesus**... our **Good Shepherd**...
- Who not only **shepherds** us, but **changes** us by his Spirit from the **inside out**...
- Again in Ezekiel, like in Jeremiah – God is doing a work in our hearts....
- Just two chapters later in Ezekiel – Ez 36:25ff *I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. <sup>26</sup> I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.*
- God’s great work of transformation within us – to make us more like Jesus! That’s the work of God’s Holy Spirit...
- So In Ezekiel – just two things I wanted to point out – this beautiful picture of God shepherding his people, and of God doing a new work within our hearts.

**Let me close**

- **Isaiah, Jeremiah – Ezekiel** – just brief glimpses today... but such rich and wonderful passages – so clearly pointing us to Jesus.
- Let me see if I can wrap up the whole Old Testament overview series with a story.
- I’m kind of embarrassed to tell you that last Friday when I had a day off, Susan and I went to the movies and saw Equalizer 3.
- Denzel Washington, plays the part of a retired CIA agent...
- In his retirement, he begins to see all kinds of injustices and knowing that he has the ability, seeks to put things right. Hardly any of it legal!
- In this third movie of the series, he’s in Italy. The mafia are running roughshod over all the local business owners in this one little village.
- It’s awful... the corruption, the threats, the intimidation, the violence...
- People are living in fear of the mob...

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- No one dare say 'no' to them... or refuse to pay them off...
- And the mob themselves – heavily involved in the drug trade....
- Denzel ends up dealing with them.... he's the Equalizer... and sets about to set people free from all that is oppressing them...
- And the feeling at the end of the movie – was one of elation... these people were relieved... virtually a whole new life had opened up before them... now free of the mafia... the joy was palpable... the sense of liberation – of freedom.
- Justice had been done! The oppressors are gone!
- Now – of course – there are **loads** of ways in which the parallels fall over... and the analogy doesn't hold...
- ...but Jesus is the great equaliser.
- Right throughout the whole Old Testament – we have seen **saviour figures**: Noah, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, the Judges... and then the great King David...
- ...but **no one** who can **finally** and **definitively** rescue **God's people**... or change them!
- We are **looking** and **looking** – waiting for the **Messiah** who will finally put all things **right** and conquer **evil**.
- Enter **JESUS**...!
- He is that one... the **great Equaliser**... who brings justice for his people... who has **conquered** that great enemy Satan through his **death** and **resurrection** and has started the process of **renewal**... in our hearts
- ...who **shepherds** his **people**... and **renews them**...
- ...who looks after them... who tends them... who protects them... provides for them...
- And who will one day... bring in the new **creation**... where everything will be made **new again**. //
- So everything in the Old Testament... **informs** us, **prepares** us for, **helps** us to **understand** – just how **necessary Jesus is**...
- Jesus has come - to bring **justice**, to **end evil**, to **change hearts** and bring us to **God** for a **perfected relationship** for all **eternity**!! //
- What a relief! What a joy!
- And we now live in joyful **expectation** – anticipation - of the great **Day of the Lord** – when everything Jesus started – will come to **fruition**.... And **we** will live in joy and elation in God's **presence forever**!
- I hope and pray the Old Testament has been opened up for you in a **new** way in these past weeks – and that you've been given some **context** – some **background** – a **framework** – to help you go and explore more... and go deeper... and continue to discover the riches that are our Old Testament Scriptures.
- And I hope you've seen all the more clearly – just how amazing and wonderful Jesus is – the hope of all the world – our only hope – our Saviour and Lord – Jesus Christ!
- Praise be to God for the gift of his Son who puts all things right!