

**Intro** Are you prepared to tell your ‘God saves sinners’ story? The opportunity to do so will certainly present itself in various ways over the celebration of the holidays. Are you prayerfully preparing to, in the terms of Isaiah the prophet, ‘cry aloud’ concerning the comfort of God to those you know and love?

Think of the wonderful memories, grateful responses, joyful celebrations and glorious pleasures that would come from sharing your ‘saved by God’ story with your family and friends. What a great way to liven up the party while expressing your obedient love for Christ.

Isaiah is an expert on the subject of being ‘saved by God.’ When Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote their gospel records of Jesus life and teaching, all used Isaiah as a primary source to explain his birth and life purpose. Your role and assignment as a proclaimer or witness is a crucial one. It certainly deserves your keen attention to preparation and readiness.

Isaiah 41:21 – 42:17 describes three key aspects of how God saves sinners. Let’s listen carefully so that God can shape and transform our thinking and speaking about this great news.

### **1. God saves sinners by exposing the gods we currently rely on.**

**I 41:21-29**

The description of God saving sinners is typically set against the backdrop of darkness, injustice and confusion because that is both the dilemma and target of the gospel. The enslavement of the human heart by sin is the issue that sets up the good news that in Christ heart cleansing and transformation is possible. Sin is essentially looking for and relying on anything other than the creator God for purpose and meaning in life.

Good things can take up the prime space in our hearts. God substitutes easily come to feel and sound like the one true God. Our hearts by nature, on their own according to the way we were born, manufacture images and idols that we regularly look to with great respect for answers, comfort and direction.

*Cmp. Galatians 4:8-10 . . . formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods . . . the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world . . . ‘*

These delusional gods that our hearts struggle to rest in are evidence of our hatred for and rejection of the one true God and his self revelation. In other words our hesitancy to find comfort and cleansing in God alone is presented by God through his prophet in embarrassingly clear terms . . . we look at metal images and say ‘you are our gods.’ (42:17) We need God’s help in exposing the darkness and rebellion of our own hearts.

Two truths about your heart idols are exposed by the scriptures:

- a. Our god substitutes cannot deliver on their promises. V.24

A god by any definition should demonstrate by actions that it has life and by power that it has control over history. Isaiah pictures the one true God badgering the false gods to say something, do anything, before coming to the conclusion of v.24. Look at this! Meaningless. The heart idol amounts to nothing in the grander scheme of things while causing the worshipper to become just like the idol. You are unsatisfied because your heart is set on meaningless gods.

b. Our god substitutes do not have any answers.

V. 28-29

Who can explain the complex and crazy events of history, such as the invasion of a foreign army (41:25-27)? Where do you turn for real solutions to the endless cycle of injustice and political impotence? The gods of human wisdom, finance, effort, education, science and personal fulfillment have not produced lasting and comprehensive solutions. Look at this! Delusion. Your heart is set on things that have no answers to your hardest questions while causing you to want to delight in their non-answers!

## 2. God saves sinners by presenting his chosen servant.

I 42:1-9

Note that the 'beholds' (Look at this!) of 41:24, 29 set up the call to now look at the servant of the Lord. Against the contrast of the disappointment and delusion of our own idolatry, God presents an option that our hearts were created to embrace. This is the first of the 4 'servant songs' recorded in Isaiah which describe the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, who he is and what he will accomplish. The core message is obvious, God saves sinners by getting them to look to Jesus Christ while rejecting the small manufactured gods that have enslaved them.

To a world without answers and with hearts full of 'junk gods,' God gives his answer and his hearts delight, Jesus.

The servant Jesus is described and affirmed by God through the prophet in verses 42:1-9. This is the Christ presented by the gospel writers. One who is both clearly truthful and powerfully transforming. The servant of the Lord, unlike your heart idols, can and will satisfy the longings of your heart.

a. The servant's description presented. Look the servant Christ over carefully . . . 42:1-4

- Notice his relationship to the Holy God of Israel. 1 cmp. Matt.3:13-17; John 3:16
- Examine his assigned function in this world – justice. 1, 3, 4 a word from God
- Look at his life changing power. 2-3 gently mends/transforms people
- Observe his commitment to saving the earth. 4 into the human situation to succeed

Cmp. Matt.12:18-21

b. The servant's authority affirmed. Look closely at who stands behind the Christ. 42:5-9

- The servant connects you with the giver and sustainer of life. 5
- The servant is sent to bring people into a saving relationship with God. 6-7 Luke 4:17-21
- The servant confirms that God alone is worthy, there is no other. 8-9

Cmp. Hebrews 1:1-4

Luke 1:76-79 2:8-14

### 3. God saves sinners by inviting you to sing a new song.

I 42:10-17

After exposing the rebellion of our heart substitutes and presenting the compassionate, life transforming servant of the Lord, God invites you the reader/listener to change your songs. That which currently causes you to lift up your voice, praise, sing and shout must be seen for what it is and rejected. Singing a new song is simply a metaphor for repentance and saving faith in the Lord's servant, Christ.

a. The invitation is for all people to change gods.                      Give glory to God!                      10-12

b. The invitation is for a hard won satisfaction in God.                      13-17

                    like a soldier 13                      like a woman in childbirth 14                      like sight to the blind 16

cmp. The songs of the advent in Luke - Mary 1:46; Zechariah 1:67; Angels 2:14; Simeon 2:29

#### Take Aways

1. **Start your story.**                      Repent and believe today.
2. **Change your story.**                      Rethink and reshape your story to accurately communicate the gospel.
3. **Tell your story.**                      Prayerfully purpose to share as God gives openings.