



Sermon Discussion Questions
September 17, 2023,
The Gospel According to Isaiah
THE LORD IS WITH US
Isaiah 41:1-13

1. Opening Discussion Questions

- a. Have you ever served on a jury? What was it like being in a real courtroom? Was it different from what you had expected from watching TV shows? How much authority did the judge seem to have? How did others in the courtroom treat him/her?
- b. If you have ever been to Colonial Williamsburg or a similar venue you may have seen a silversmith at work and had the opportunity to examine the smith's finished product. What did you notice about the tools being used? Were you surprised at the quality of work the smith could produce with such tools?

2. Study/Discussion Points:

a. *The Sermon's Key Points*

- i. The Lord is Sovereign Over the Mightiest Powers on Earth. (Isaiah 41:1-7).
- ii. The Lord Is With His People (Isaiah 41:8-9).
- iii. The Lord Helps His People (Isaiah 41:10-13)

b. *Monday – God summons the nations to consider Him.*

- i. Remember, chapter and verse divisions were added long after the Bible was written. To put the focal passage into context, go back and read Isaiah 40:27-31 and then continue directly to Isaiah 41:1.
 1. What similarities or connections do you see between the end of chapter 40 and the beginning of chapter 41?
 2. How does Isaiah 40:28a give a legal basis for calling the nations to court in 41:1? Consider Jeremiah 18:6-10 and Romans 9:20-21 as you answer.
- ii. Isaiah 41:1 introduces an imaginary court case between God and the idols worshipped by the nations.
 1. In today's legal vernacular how would you paraphrase the opening sentence?

2. The term “coastline” (ESV) or “islands” (NIV) is used repeatedly in Isaiah (11:11; 24:15; 41:1, 5; 42:4, 10, 12; 49:1; 51:5; 59:18; 60:9; and 66:19). What do you think Isaiah means when he uses it?

c. **Tuesday** – *The summons brings terror to those who don’t know God.*

- i. Read Isaiah 41:2-7 (in several translations if possible).
 1. What is your impression of what is being described?
 2. What rhetorical question does God ask twice (verses 2 and 4a)?
 3. What is His answer (verse 4b)?
 4. What characteristic of God does He describe in His answer (see Revelation 22:13)? How does that set Him apart and above the idols that are being crafted in verse 7?
- ii. Compare the activities of the conqueror that has been “stirred up” in verse 2-3 with the description of God’s view of nations described in Isaiah 40:15-17.
 1. What can we conclude about the “one from the east”?
 2. Who is the “one from the east”? See Isaiah 45:1-3.
- iii. What is the world’s reaction to the “one from the east”? In the face of this threat, where do they turn? On what do they rely?

d. **Wednesday** – *God reminds the exiles that He is with them.*

- i. With verse 8 God shifts the discussion from the world to His chosen people. Read verses 8-10.
 1. How does He start His encouragement of the Jews in captivity?
 2. What reassurance does He give them in verse 9?
 3. They are repeatedly reminded that they are His “servants”. What does that title signify to you? Read these verses: Numbers 12:7, 2 Samuel 2:18, Jeremiah 7:25, Isaiah 42:1, Philippians 2:7. Do they change your perception of being a servant in any way?
- ii. God is specific in telling the Jewish exiles that He has not rejected them. Why would this have been particularly important as the Babylonian empire is falling to Cyrus’ Persian army?
 1. How would passages such as 2 Kings 23:26-27 & 24:1-4 and Jeremiah 27:10 & 32:30-35 influence the thinking of the Jewish exiles?
 2. How might their thought have been different if instead they had focused on Joshua 1:5, Deuteronomy 31:8, 1 Kings 8:57 and 2 Chronicles 7:14?

e. **Thursday** – *God is with us in Jesus Christ.*

- i. As Christians we experience a very different situation than the Jewish exiles.
 1. Read Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23. What does the term Immanuel tell us?
 2. How does Jesus using the same words in John 8:58 and 18:5 as God used in Isaiah 41:4 confirm His status as Immanuel?
- ii. Not only is “God with us” but Jesus gave us an even greater promise. Read John 14:17-20. What assurance do we have as Christians that was not available to the Jewish exiles?
- iii. How do John 6:37-40 and Romans 8:35-39 reinforce and strengthen this assurance?
- iv. Based on 1 John 1:9 what do we need to do to maintain this beautiful relationship?

f. **Friday** – *God is not an observer; He is our helper and strength.*

- i. Read Isaiah 41:10-13.
 1. Depending on the translation there are about ten promises that God gives the exiles in this passage. List as many as you can identify. If you were one of the exiled Jews which promise would be most important to you?
 2. Humanly, why would they fear the advancing Persian army? Why does God say they should not?
 3. We probably all understand fear but what does it mean to be “dismayed”? Read these verses as you consider your response: Psalm 30:7, Psalm 83:1-2 & 17-18, 2 Kings 19:25-26, Jeremiah 30:8-11 & 46:27-28 and Obadiah 8-9.
- ii. How do you think verses 11-12 would have sounded to a people that were in captivity far from their homeland?
 1. How do you think they apply to us today?
 2. What do John 8:34, Romans 6:16-22 & 7:14, and Hebrews 2:18 suggest?

g. **Saturday** – *Fear Not!*

- i. The term “Fear not” occurs at least 33 times in the ESV Bible and “do not be afraid” over 70 times in the NIV.
 1. What does it suggest to you that they are repeated so frequently?
 2. Is there a “Fear not” or “do not be afraid passage” that comes to mind when you hear the phrase?

3. Use a concordance and look up some of these passages.
- ii. Franklin D. Roosevelt famously said, “Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the assessment that something else is more important than fear.”
 1. Do you agree?
 2. From God’s perspective as taught in the Bible is the command to “Fear not” just telling us to be courageous or does it go beyond that?

3. Application:

- a. For the Jews in exile in Babylon captivity was a terrible experience yet God was going to turn it around in a manner no one could have foreseen. When we experience difficulties in life, we should keep their experience in mind and always remember Romans 8:28: “*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*”
- b. One of the most common reasons people give for not sharing their faith is “Fear”. When you find yourself in such a situation remember God’s command to “Fear not.”

4. Prayer Points:

- a. **A**doration – 1 Peter 4:16
- b. **C**onfession – James 5:16
- c. **T**hanksgiving – Philippians 4:6
- d. **S**upplications – James 4:2-3
 - i. That God will provide opportunities for each of us to share the Gospel with someone this week.
 - ii. For the Love Our Neighbor weekend on September 30th – that many of our neighbors will be introduced to Christ.
 - iii. For the continuation of the “Grow Deeper” Discipleship class and the new Vines and Branches cohort.
 - iv. The 40 some kids that are signed up and attending the Wednesday evening Awana program and for the volunteers leading the activities.
 - v. For the decisions regarding the land sale that need to be made at the business meeting on the 20th.
 - vi. The suffering following the natural disasters in Morocco and Libya – particularly that there will be opportunities to share the Gospel in these closed countries.
 - vii. For the entire staff of Lake Ridge Baptist Church.