

Sunday 27th August **'Listen to me...'**
Isaiah 51:1-6 Romans 12:1-8 Matthew 16:13-20

Isaiah

Major prophet who brought God's word people of Israel

Maybe one of best known prophets

Christmas words from Isaiah 9 Wonderful Counsellor, Almighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of peace

Good and bad news, easy to hear and very difficult, words of warning

Like here - words of encouragement and hope

Isaiah writing here to the Hebrew people in time of exile

Remember the song by Boney M By the Rivers of Babylon

By the rivers of babylon, there we sat down

Ye-eah we wept, when we remembered zion

Taken from Psalm 137

Isaiah is talking to the faithful people of Israel who were pursuing righteousness but were caught up in the oppression and grief of exile

Taken from their homeland which was now depopulated, barren, waste ground

Their sacred city of Jerusalem had been desecrated when the temple had been burnt

Their king - Zedekiah - had been captured, tortured and killed

For more than a generation they had suffered pain and disgrace at the hands of their captors

Here Isaiah is bringing them words of hope, words to remind them of God's faithfulness and grace

Takes them back to their roots

Reminds them to look back to where they have come from, their foundations

He reminds them of the founder of their people - Abraham and his wife Sarah and the miracle that God performed through them to birth the nation of Israel

Remember... God promised Abraham that he would be the father of a nation with descendants more numerous than the stars

But Abraham & Sarah did not conceive their first child until A was 99 and S 90

God performed an incredible miracle but it had taken a long time of waiting

Then Isaiah goes on to speak of God's promise and hope to come

God promises that the now wastelands that once they called home, the city and buildings that once were their home, would all be restored

The deserts would become like Eden

The wastelands would become the garden of the Lord

The tears and sadness that were being wept in Babylon would become joy and gladness and thanksgiving and singing once again

The dry and barren land would once again become a place of abundance and growth

Because of what God would do

A new horizon was becoming possible, the Babylonians would be taken over by the Persians, the Jewish nation would be allowed home to re-settle

A reminder to the people of what God could AND WOULD do

An amazing picture of transformation
Hope at last

Listen to me !

But look what God says to His people

Listen to me

In fact in just these few verses God says 7 times

Listen to me, Look to..., give heed to me, Lift up your eyes
In the midst of their exile, their grief, their sadness, their suffering it had become
understandable that they had found it difficult, if not impossible, to keep listening to God

Ever been at an exciting event when you have become totally focused on something to the point of
blinking out other things around you

Sports match of some kind, either live or on TV

May remember me telling you couple of weeks ago about school friend whose dad shaved his
beard off? Well I can remember one year watching a lot of Wimbledon at her house and one final
when we all got ver carried away.....

So consuming that everything else became drowned out. ...

That is an exciting example of how a situation can become all consuming

But what about other, much more sad or traumatic situations

The depth of fear or pain or suffering can make it almost impossible to hear words of hope or
encouragement from God or anyone else

Disappointment, failure, sadness, loss of a job, sickness, grief

Can all render us deaf to everything except our own pain

In the midst of the pain and sorrow that the Hebrew people were experiencing God reminds them
to listen to Him, to look to Him, to give heed (pay attention) to him

Word for us as His people in Owlsmoor

Word to us as a nation

Sooo much around us that consume us, understandably

Natural disasters, political chaos, personal circumstances,

But none of these will have the final word

LISTEN and HEAR God's voice

His salvation is sure and eternal, outlasting creation

vs 6

Lift up your eyes to the heavens,

and look at the earth beneath;

for the heavens will vanish like smoke,

the earth will wear out like a garment,

and those who live on it will die like gnats;

but my salvation will be for ever,

and my deliverance will never be ended.

Jesus said to Peter I will build my church (Kingdom) and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it

During September we are going to be looking at prayer and giving it a try!

Next week... To whom do we pray

Evening film War Room... Prayer is a powerful weapon

Our situation, individually and as a church and as a nation and as world can seem overwhelming

But when we choose to LISTEN TO Him even when feels impossible, He promises us a hope and a future that will last beyond this earthly life, a salvation that will last for ever.