

EXERCISE:

Study the life and “heart” of Isaiah and his people.



Isaiah 40



Isaiah 43:1-7



Isaiah 51, 52, 53

What do you learn from Isaiah and the people of Israel?

Read the five chapters and describe what the chapters tell us about the people of Israel. Why are the people so sad?

What do we learn from these stories about suffering and the comfort God wants to provide?

What is chapter 53 about?

How does God comfort his people here?

Try to apply the story you read here to Jesus’ life and what happened to him at the end of His life.

Which lessons about the kingdom of God can you learn from these four chapters?

What do you learn about Isaiah for your own life?



Isaiah 53

Read this chapter and apply it to your own life.

Ask yourself four questions:

1. Do I find a word of God for me personally in this text?
2. Does it contain a promise from the Father for my life?
3. Does Jesus ask me to apply anything to my life?
4. Decide to do something about it and ask Jesus to help you with this

Testimony

I had spent nine months working on these studies. Around Christmas 2011 I noticed that it faltered. The writing was not flowing and I was stuck trying to think of ideas. I had arrived at this chapter: mourners will be comforted. Whilst thinking about people mourning and having written a few random thoughts down, I fell in to a dip which lasted about 6 weeks. It started with a phone call informing me that my father had had a fall and needed to go to hospital for an x-ray.

According to the photos everything was normal; my father's pain was probably severe bruising.

My father's health continued to worsen at great pace from that moment on. He was not looking well. After Christmas we picked him up and brought him to our home. This was not a great idea. He was in a lot of pain and often drifted off. Considering the fact that he had not been able to speak for 8 years due to bleeding on the brain, it was very difficult to understand what was now wrong.

Two days later we decided to take him back to hospital for more tests. It appeared that he had a broken hip and two crushed vertebrae. This man must have been in immense pain. During the x-rays the pain was so great that he grabbed me tight and yelled in agony. I could do nothing and felt powerless. A silent prayer rose in my heart. "God where are you, please help this man!"

Whilst we were stood embracing, I received a picture which was of great comfort to me later. God showed me how faithful my father had been his whole life long.

Faithful to his parents when his father was sick and could not run the business any more. My father was still very young but took over the business to provide for everyone. Faithful for all those years my mother was extremely depressed. He stayed by her side all those years and coped with difficult times.

Even when he was sick, up to the moment that he now was suffering in hospital, he remained faithful to God. I will forever see those hands folded in prayer before God before each meal. Even in this great suffering he was faithful and was looking forward to being with God.

During the last days on his sick-bed it was extremely difficult at various moments. I was extremely sad sometimes and wanted to help, comfort, relieve the pain, but that wasn't easy. Yet there was a very special moment. For about an hour I sat and shared my thoughts with my father. I could tell him why he is and would remain my hero. A hero is someone who has achieved something special or done something important for their people. I was able to tell my father that he had sown something wonderful; faith and endurance! In that moment God comforted us. We sat there together in silence, total

silence. God's great comfort flowed through us and felt so good. There was sadness but also something so comforting.

Shortly after my father passed away. During the days after the funeral I sometimes felt a sense of emptiness. Time and again God's comfort came to me. In those moments I would think back to when my children were young and sometimes sad. They would come to me, climb on to my lap and hold me tight. After giving them comfort they would be back to running and laughing again 30 minutes later.

In one of those moments of emptiness I was sitting in a church gathering. We were singing songs which touched me deep in my heart. The Comforter himself came to fill my emptiness.

God you are so loving!

Going deeper

In Matt 5:4 Jesus places an important seed down for the culture of the kingdom of God. He tells the disciples that those who mourn will be comforted.

This is the culture within which the kingdom bears fruit.

What does Jesus mean by those who mourn?



Is 58:6-10



Is 61: 1-3



Matt 25:35

The kingdom is here for those who mourn!



Luke 4:14-19

Jesus makes it very clear right away for whom he has come. He came for the poor, those captive (also captive in their soul/spirit), the blind and oppressed. Jesus knows all too well that God's enemy has caused the exact opposite here on earth. Satan has brought sorrow, grief, bitterness, fear, hate and much more.




Rom 14:17

Jesus demonstrates to the people that the Kingdom of God brings righteousness, peace and joy.

First of all he speaks of restoration which the Spirit of God will bring about through him. He tells the people that the year of favour has come. This is in great contrast to what Isaiah wrote.

What is the difference between the words of Jesus and the words of Isaiah?


 *Is 61:2*


 *Luke 4:19*


Isaiah speaks about grace and the day of vengeance. Jesus leaves out the latter. The emphasis is on grace. You receive something which you did not deserve. Jesus removed the judgement which was upon mankind and brings words of grace instead of judgement and revenge.

People who lived under the judgement of the law for many years, people who have become poor, been captive or strangers, now hear words of grace. This is how Jesus comforts them.

What comfort does Jesus bring?


 *John 14:1-3*

 *John 15:26, 16:1-7*

 *John 19:25-27*

Jesus knows all too well how his disciples feel and continuously encourages and comforts them. Even when he himself is suffering he thinks of his mother Mary. God gave us family to be there for one another, to encourage one another and to comfort. In this we see something beautiful of God's character.

Secret of the kingdom.

 *Heb 12:2*

Jesus earned the greatest victory of all times. Not by demonstrating power and might, but by total surrender to the cross. Despite lots of earlier attacks or death threats on Jesus life, no one could cause him any harm. God the Father did not allow them to!

But when it was God's timing he allowed himself, like a lamb not offering any resistance, to be caught and sentenced to death on the cross. He suffered enormous pain from the torturing and eventually died on the cross. Through this act satan was defeated, victory over death was won and the power of sin broken. Jesus' suffering had huge consequences. Many can now enter the kingdom.

Jesus could carry out this task because his eyes were not focussed on the suffering, but that which lay beyond the suffering: the joy of victory.

The secret of the kingdom does not lie in gaining victory through your own strength and efforts but in the carrying out of God's will. This goes together with brokenness. This way ultimately leads to joy and peace.

Paul



2 Cor 12:9,10



2 Cor 4:7-11

Paul went through much suffering and pain. And yet he knew the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Paul knew as no other what persecution was. But through this the life of Jesus became visible. Many churches were planted and many people were healed, set free and forgiven.

Our task

The culture of the kingdom is a culture of comfort; looking out for the weak in society, but also looking after the people around us who need comforting. The Holy Spirit is the Comforter. He lives in us and wants to give comfort to others through us.



Matt 25:35: For I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.



Matt 25:38-40



Matt 25:43: I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, naked and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.



Matt 25:44,45

EXERCISE



How are you doing in life? What happens to you when you go through difficult times? Look to your heavenly Father. Seek his comfort in these moments.



Discuss with your mentor how you can help people, take a look together to see if there are people having a hard time who could do with your help. Look with your mentor in to what is a way of helping which suits your character.