

Live your best life

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Date: 01 June 2025

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[0 : 0 0] So we're continuing in this series in Isaiah. It's a great series that will go in Isaiah 40 to 55. I'm just going to pray for us just now! Almighty God, we come to you wanting to hear from you from the Bible and we pray as we think about these words now that you would encourage us, that you would build us up, that where we feel a bit weary, and downtrodden, that you would lift us up.

And so bless us, we pray. Help us to know how much you love us. We ask for this in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, I don't know if you've heard this phrase that keeps coming up.

People keep saying this phrase is living your best life. He's living his best life. You've heard that people say that? They might say if when someone is on holiday and they see a child playing, they point at the child and say, look at that kid.

He's living his best life. Or they might post a photo on social media and they put, look at me, hashtag, living my best life.

The suggestion when people post that is saying, I'm getting the most out of today. I'm flourishing. Look at me.

[1 : 2 9] And that's kind of what people want to suggest. I'm living my best life. Everyone wants that, don't they? Without question. Everybody wants to live what we might think of, if we think of what would our best life be?

Because everyone wants to get the most out of today. We all want to flourish in whatever we do. The truth really is this, that when you think about anything daily life or you think about work or what we're doing, people only flourish when we live with a purpose.

People only really flourish when we live with purpose, when we live how we're intended to live. The same applies to actually everything that we see in our world.

It applies to any living creature. You see a wild animal in the wild as opposed to in a zoo. Now, I love zoos. I love to see animals.

I've had a membership there, so I'm not being down on zoos. But even the most avid zookeeper or enthusiast knows that a tiger, a lion, a cheetah is not living as it was intended to, in a cage.

[2 : 4 7] You imagine, I'd love to see this. Can you imagine, we've seen it on the TV, a cheetah in the savannah, 0-60 in under three seconds, in three strides, it goes from 0-60.

Accelerates faster than most sports cars. When you see that, you know that that is kind of what it's made to do. As good as zoos are, you know, the breeding, looking after the animals, great work.

A cheetah is not able to flourish and live its best life behind bars. Humans, people, us, we're designed and created to be God's image with purpose.

And we live our best life. We flourish when we live that purpose out. We flourish when we live that purpose out. And our purpose comes, it comes right at the beginning of the Bible.

It comes in Genesis 1. The purpose is to, that God gives humankind, is to, is his image, is to rule over the world, to rule over the natural order, to have dominion, and to serve the living God.

- [3 : 57] But when we do that, it's maintain, and when we live that out, it's maintaining the natural order of the way that God has made his world. God at the helm, God in charge, with us underneath serving him, and the world being blessed, because we do what God says in his world.
- When people, when we, when humanity lives like that, they're serving God, they're flourishing, and actually so does everyone around them. So does everyone around them.
- The story of God's people, in the Bible, from one perspective, you can look at it from different perspectives, is a story of actually what we see, is of God's people, failing to live that out.
- Failing to live their best life, failing to flourish, failing to live out their God intended purpose. The failure really, is because, what people, and what we've tried to do, is flip the natural order.
- We've tried to invert it. That's what we see with Adam. He tries to put himself at the top, right in the garden. And it's what we see with Israel. They put themselves at the top of the pyramid, instead of God, and serve themselves, instead of him.
- [5 : 14] It's exactly what happened to Israel. It's what we keep coming back to, that this book is written to Israel, after they've been doing this, for hundreds of years, and they're kicked out of their land, and into Babylon.
- These chapters that we're reading, is written to the people, who have not served God. They've not lived out their purpose. They're not flourishing. This chapter that we have this morning, it's the first in the section, of four songs.
- They're known, if you're interested, they're known as the servant songs. And they come in this series, from Isaiah 40 to 55. And the one that we're looking at today, I think it's perhaps two things.
- It is aspirational to Israel. It is aspirational to live, as the true image of God. If they're to live as God's servant, they will flourish. They will live their best life.
- They will bless others, and be a blessing to all the nations of the world. This is what you could be, Israel. It is aspirational. But more importantly, it is something else.
- [6 : 24] More importantly, it is what we call prophetic. It's prophetic, because it's really pointing forward to the true image of God. The true perfect servant who flourished completely.
- The one who would restore the natural order. It's pointing forward to the perfect servant, Jesus Christ. The one who flourished and lived the best human life, Barnum.
- My hope and prayer is that as we look at the life of the servant here, we'll see, we'll actually just see how amazing Jesus is, but also we might reflect on what it means to serve God ourselves, and for us to live our best life.
- We're going to break this song down into four points. We're going to see the task of the servant, the character of the servant, the identity of the servant, and then the fruit of the servant. Task, character, identity, fruit.
- So first we have the task. The task of the servant, we see, is to bring justice to the nations. Look at me, verse 1.
- [7 : 32] He said, Living God speaking, he's speaking to Israel. Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one, in whom I delight. I will put my spirit on him, and he will bring, here it is, justice to the nations.
- Now we have a question to ask. What does, what do we mean by justice here? I don't know what you think of when you hear the word justice. My immediate thoughts go to the British justice system, probably from watching too many courtroom dramas.

Men in wigs, dishing out punishments to criminals so that victims get justice and our streets are safer. I don't know, maybe you think of something else, but that's what comes to mind for me.

In the Bible, the word translated as justice, it's a Hebrew word, it's mishpat, if you want to know. It has a much broader meaning than that. It can be dishing out punishments so that victims get justice, but it's so much more.

The emphasis is really on what justice brings. That justice brings about an ordered, beautiful society. It is, he will bring a just world to the nations, is perhaps another way you might say it perhaps.

[8 : 48] When the servant brings justice to the nations, they will become perfectly just and ordered. And in a sense, that's why there will be no victims, because it's harmonious and beautiful and everybody is flourishing.

The only way that happens is if the world is ordered in line with what was intended in the beginning. God at the helm, at the top of the pyramid, with his law, with his way, his laws being loved and obeyed completely.

That order, if people lived like that, would lead to the perfect, harmonious, beautiful society where everyone prospers. It's the beautiful life. It's the beautiful life.

When we know what the connotation is behind that word justice, that it's more than just a justice system, what we see is that the servant's task has a sharper focus.

It has a broader, a sharper, in a way, a sharper focus, but also a broader focus. That the servant's task is to bring, this is what he will bring, love, order, just, a just, beautiful way to the world, to Israel, to the nations.

[10 : 09] That right order will be, that is always what life was intended to be, like will be renewed and restored. We have a, there's a term for that way.

The way, that's the kingdom of God. That is what we call that society when it lives like that under God's rule. We call it, it's called the kingdom of God, the beautiful life, the perfect society with nations living under God.

Israel, God's people, he was their king, they had his law and if they had lived by it, if they had served him, the nations would have seen this beautiful kingdom society lived out.

They could have done that, that's what he wanted them to do. He wants them, he's, to aspire to do that. But it really points forward to Jesus.

Jesus is the true servant, he's the true image of God. And remember, what does he say when he, when he comes to earth, when he starts his earthly ministry, what's the first thing he says, Mark's gospel, he announces, the kingdom of God has come near.

[11 : 22] When he says that, he means the kingdom, the beautiful society, I'm going to establish right order and people who follow him, the natural order with living with God at the helm, it is restored in the way that they live.

He establishes it, how? Through the good news of the gospel. It's what happens when people are saved, what happened at salvation, when people start to believe and follow Jesus, that's exactly what happens.

The right order is restored, God becomes the king of your life. Isn't that what happened when you put your trust in him yourself? You began to live with a different set of values.

It was God's values and his ways and not your own and that inverted order was put back to how it should be. And he's still establishing it today.

Jesus Christ has not finished the job of bringing justice to the nations. He is the servant that continues to make this happen, to continue to work, to bring this about in the lives of everyday people, to bring salvation, to make people realise that inverted order, we don't flourish, but they flourish when God is at the helm of our lives.

[12 : 52] So that's the first thing, the task of the servant. Now just as important as the task itself is actually, it kind of comes together with the task, this, is actually what we're going to see is the character of the servant.

You see, the character, how someone does their task, actually dictates how the beautiful kingdom operates. It's part, it comes together, which is where we're going to, which is what we're going to look at.

Secondly, the character of the servant, the character of the servant, so it is kind of indicative of what the kingdom will look like. How someone does something is actually as important as getting to the goal.

the manner, the nature, the way someone goes about their mission is what attracts people to it, isn't it? There are three things that we see about the servant here as he brings justice to the nations.

We see that he does it quietly, we see that he brings it about compassionately, and then we see that he brings it about comprehensively.

[14 : 03] Firstly, look with me, he brings it about quietly, verse two. He will not shout or cry out or raise his voice in the streets.

That is not normally the way of people, of leaders, maybe you might think, in our history. Leaders do not normally impose their rule or their way of doing things when they first perhaps come into office quietly, but it's normally with noisy fanfare.

Even now, world leaders, you're not mentioning any in particular, but try to big themselves up, don't they? Look what I've done. Aren't I amazing? Isn't everything better under me?

They'll tell anyone who will listen of what they've done and there are big achievements and they execute firm with a, rule with a firm hand, make a song and a dance about those who disagree with them, try to put the opposition down and there's sound bites pointing out flaws.

No, that is not the way of God's servant and it's not the way of Jesus Christ. Even his, think of his entry into our world, was definitely without fanfare, born as a baby surrounded by animals into the muck of life.

[15 : 28] Who found out first? Shepherds on a hillside that nobody cared about. In his ministry, he didn't make a song and a dance about anything he did.

In fact, he even told those he healed to be quiet about what he'd done for them. The quiet way of Jesus changing people's lives, making them realise that God was at the helm.

And so that they would, in doing that, flourish. That they would live their best life. So, first is quietly.

The second we see is compassionately. Verse 3. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out.

In faithfulness he will bring forth justice. justice. There's the realisation here, isn't there, that people are bruised.

[16 : 31] Once full of fire for life, but things happen and it can feel like we're nearly out. And the older we get, perhaps the more bruises we have.

the servant here sees people in their brokenness, in their mess, sees the effect of the disorder, knowing that sometimes the reason that we have brokenness is sometimes the world is coming at us and we're under the world's assaults, under the evil at every corner, but knowing as well that sometimes it's because we've inverted and put ourselves on top instead of God.

knowing all that and yet not breaking people because of it. Jesus won't break people to bring about the beautiful kingdom.

He's not a tyrannical maniac that forces, pushes and shoves with people as collateral damage. No, he does it with the manner that he brings in this beautiful life with God at the helm.

It's full of compassion. He sees every person. He knows your story. He knows yours and mine. He knows where you're hurting.

[17 : 52] He knows what would break you. He knows what would break your faith in him. you won't be snuffed out.

Quietly, compassionately and then we see comprehensively verse 4. He will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth.

In his teaching, the islands will put their hope. The servant is persistent in bringing the beautiful ordered society. And he does it by teaching God's law.

In his teaching, the islands will put their hope. With his words and by his actions, he teaches. People see and hear the beauty. They see Jesus.

They hear what he has to say. They see the way that he lives and hope is renewed. A living God returns to the helm of people's lives. His kingdom is established. Isaiah is proposing this way to Israel.

[19 : 00] If they will serve their God, they can aspire to this. Jesus sees how people live and yet he doesn't give up. He never said, he never said, and he never will say, I've had enough now, you know, stuff you, I've had enough.

No, he kept on going all the way to the cross to establish the reign of God in the world to the nations. The just, beautiful, ordered, perfect society, justice, the kingdom of God brought by the servant of God quietly, compassionately and comprehensively.

And this is still the way of Jesus in our world today. It is still his way with us. Jesus doesn't shout at you with anger and wrath, but he loves you because he's called you as his children.

He doesn't break you. And just, and the kingdom of God will be extensive. It will cover the whole world, but it will also cover every part of your life.

And also he instills that character in the life of the church today, in us. This is the way that he wants us to bring about his mission in the world.

[20 : 27] He wants us to do it quietly. We don't go shouting our mouths off. We don't go shouting at people to tell them to come to church. We do think compassionately we listen.

We see how life has battered people. We don't break them and manipulate but love showing them that God reigns and that following him is the way that they flourish.

And we do it comprehensively. We want everyone to know his rule. the beautiful life that he offers. That's the character of the servant.

The task of the servant, the character of the servant. We're now going to see the identity, the identity of the servant. You'll notice with me for verse 5 how the way that God speaks changes.

Verse 1 to 4 he's talking about the servant. Now he's speaking from verse 6 definitely speaking to him. He's confirming, he's affirming the servant, speaking to him about his identity.

[21 : 40] And the servant's identity really comes from his relationship to the Lord. Without the Lord the servant would be a nobody, unable to do anything. It's like an ambassador, perhaps you might say, to another country.

An ambassador, British ambassador to other countries, their identity as the ambassador, it stems from the relationship to the country they serve, doesn't it?

When they speak to another nation or on a diplomatic engagement, they don't speak for themselves, but they speak for the nation, they represent that nation, and so their identity as an ambassador stems from the relationship they have with the country they come from.

The servant's relationship here, or his identity here, it stems from his relationship to the living God, to the Lord. Notice with me, as we've said, it is the Lord telling the servant that he's going to do it through him.

He confirms his task. It is the Lord's mission through the servant. The servant has purpose, meaning, identity because of his relationship to the Lord.

[22 : 51] The Lord, verse 5, who is the creator of the heavens, the one who gives breath to its people and life to those who walk on it, is doing everything through the servant. Verse 6, I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness, I will take hold of your hand.

The servant is empowered by the living God to bring forth his beautiful kingdom society, to bring forth the justice and order. father. Jesus' identity is because of his relationship to his father.

Jesus is the perfect image of God. To see the servant, to see Jesus Christ, to know him, is to see and to know the father.

Jesus says that himself. To see me is to see the father. father. Jesus is perfectly righteous. Jesus is empowered by the spirit.

He has the presence of God wherever he goes. He speaks the words of God bringing about God's mission. And we have a relationship with Jesus.

[24 : 04] It means that our identity as God's people comes because of our relationship to the living God, the creator of the heavens. You just consider that for one moment.

Just consider that for one moment. What God says about himself, he's the creator of the heavens and the earth. It is the creator of the heavens and the earth, the one who made you, the one whose existence expands beyond all time, all power, belongs to him, he's unlimited.

You can't, the moment you start to think of, put a size on him, you've limited him, he's bigger than that. The one who created the heavens and the earth is the one who takes hold of your hand.

He's the one who calls you in righteousness to be his ambassador. The church, us, are the ones who are to bring this beautiful reordering back to how it's supposed to be with God at the helm, to show the nations the beautiful life.

Task, character, identity. I'm going to finish off with the fruit of the servant. The servant, as we've said, is doing the Lord's work.

[25 : 22] The servant, as we've said, brings about the kingdom of God. The servant, as we've said, when that kingdom is established, when justice and harmony are at their order, God is at the helm.

And when that happens, there is fruit, there is change in people's lives. As people become part of the kingdom, we see spiritual fruit coming from Jesus' ministry, and we see fruit in their lives.

End of verse 6. He said, I will keep you, I will keep you, and I will make you, to be what? He's telling the servant, this is what I'm going to do. I will keep you, and I will make you, to be a covenant for the people, and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison, and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

The servant himself is the covenant promise. He is the promise to the people. The promise is the promise to them.

that as people meet and encounter the servant, as they see him, he shows them what is on offer through him. He is the light.

[26 : 31] He is the light to the Gentiles. He's the light to the nations. He was the light to us. The disordered life, as you see, as maybe perhaps as we've done, as we, at one point, we were in that strife and mess and disorder, and then we saw Jesus.

We met Jesus, and our life came into contact, in a sense, with him, and it was shown to be what it really is. We realised that we hadn't been able to see properly.

The servant opens eyes to see their need for God at the helm. Freed from captivity to sin, and the darkness of the world made clear.

Out of spiritual darkness. This is the way of the servant. The kingdom of God, the beautiful life, God at the helm, a just, harmonious existence.

And of course, don't we see that in the life of Jesus? He healed people's physical blindness. He healed people's physical blindness.

[27 : 51] Why? As a signpost to us, that he restores the brokenness, that he restores justice. That people who've suffered under the curse of sin, the effects of a broken world, and the effects of all evil, because of the inverted order.

He puts the order back right, so that everything that has happened with the curse is reversed. That's the fruit in the kingdom of God. You might remember, he sets prisoners free, he exercises demons.

Remember the man in the garrisons? Full of spiritual evil, possessed, no one able to go near him. Jesus tells the demons to leave, and they leave, and the people find the man sitting, how?

Sitting in his right mind. Whom the Son sets free is free indeed. You know, in a sense, we're just like the man there in the garrisons.

We all need setting free. We're all, in one sense, addicts. It's just some addictions are more socially acceptable than others.

[29 : 07] Jesus sets people free to live a life that's following him, which flourishes, which is beautiful. The servant is, verse 9, the new thing that is being declared, like a plant sprouting with its first shoots in the spring, the new thing will spring into being.

It's the living God who is making them here, declaring these things to them. When people, when God's people live like this, it will be like nothing else that has happened before.

God will declare to the nations, through his servant Christ Jesus, what this will look like. That is what God is doing today through us.

The new thing that God is doing, it's not like a new thing in a moment. It's not like next week or something's going to be some new thing.

It's the new thing has been happening for 2,000 years. The new thing is that Jesus Christ came as compared to the old ways that he did in the Old Testament.

[30 : 23] The new thing, the servant came and that through the gospel, he has done this, he has begun this. The kingdom of God is near. The old inverted order has been put right and that the new thing is that we, the church, are empowered by the spirit of God to keep bringing this about.

Jesus Christ is at work through us, restoring people to how life should really be, making them flourish and live in the beautiful way, the beautiful kingdom.

Justice. It's just another way of talking about salvation. And if you want to flourish in life, if you want to hashtag live your best life now, the only really way that you can do that is if you live as you're intended to live, which is having the order, the natural order restored where Christ is your king.

Only in Christ, belonging to him, living for him, can you do that. Only when we serve him do we live that as image bearers, who with every part of our life submit to his rule across the sphere of who we are.

Letting God reign over every inch of your life. Letting his kingship and rule touch every moment in time, having him at the helm. The kingdom of God, the beautiful order, just way, harmonious existence.

[31 : 54] It becomes just part of who we are. And yet, as it becomes part of who we are, it becomes nearer to those who are perishing. Because Christ's rule, the true servant, he's here.

He's here today. He's here and each of you has put their trust in him. And the kingdom of God is near.

And through you, through the church, he's impacting our world to restore the beautiful way. Let me pray. Almighty God, we come to you in so much thanks and praise that we know there was a time when we didn't live with you at the helm.

We didn't live with you as king. And instead of every inch of our life being touched by your kingship, every inch of our life was, we were leading, we were going without you.

But Lord, you came into our lives and you came as the servant and you spoke to us quietly, compassionately, and yet comprehensively you moved our hearts so that we would be part of your kingdom, so that this beautiful way of life would be our way too.

[33 : 23] You invited us in and made us citizens of heaven. And so we praise you. We praise you, the goodness of the gospel, that you've reordered our way so that we are living our best life now, so that we flourish.

And I pray, living God, that as we continue to see that work out in the way that we live, I pray that we would impact those around us, that we would be a blessing to the nations, that this harmonious existence that we're part of, that we would be near to those who don't know you, near to those who are lost.

And I ask that through us, through the church, you'd continue to work and continue to establish justice. Establish justice, the just way, the beautiful life. Establish it in Winchborough.

Establish it in West Lothian, in Scotland. We pray that you'd establish it more and more. And we require, we're in need, that you do this, that you take hold of our hand and that you do it through us to be a light.

To open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison, so that your glory does not go to another, but to yourself. We ask for this in the name of Christ.

[34 : 42] Amen.