

I want to hold your hand

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[0 : 00] Well, we're continuing our series in Isaiah. So we're actually on Isaiah 50.! It's on page 738. Alright. The kind of the passage, the bit that we're looking at is going to be from chapter 50 from verse 4 to 11.

And last week we finished in like verse 3. But I'm just going to read, once we get to it, the first three verses. It'll help us like set up a little bit of context as how, from where we go with verse 4.

And you'll see what I mean by that a bit later. But let me pray for us. So 738 we're on. But let me pray first. Almighty God, we just thank you so much that you give us the Bible, you give us your word.

And that you have spoken through generations the same word you've spoken to people. All throughout the world today, you're speaking to your people.

And we're a part of that. You're speaking to us now. And it's personal for us as a body, as a church, but for us as individuals too. And so I just pray for our hearts now that you'd help us to hear and be fed by the word through the spirit of God.

[1 : 19] And so I ask for that now in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, before we go and read the passage, just by way of introduction, I want you to think back to being a young child.

Perhaps, I don't know, five, six, seven. I want you to think back then. I think when you were a child and you wake, one night you wake in the middle of the night. It's dark.

It's about three o'clock in the morning. You've had a nightmare. And when you wake up, you hear noises around the house. Everyone else is asleep, but you also need a pee.

Okay. You've got the nightmare. You can hear weird noises and you need a toilet. Now, you have a choice to make. Be brave.

Fumble around in the dark. Or hold it in there for as long as possible. Or do what most of us did. And what most children will still do, depending on what age.

[2 : 24] Call out for help. Because in that moment in the dark, what we needed when our senses are all over the place, what we needed is not bravery, but mum and dad's hand.

To reassure us that everything's fine, karma's dying, you've been dreaming, reorientate us back to our room, get us to the toilet in one place, perhaps a glass of water, settle back down. At a young age, you know, doing that on your own is a big deal.

You can't do it yourself. You're still dependent on your parents to help you make it through. As we fast forward through life from that child to adulthood, the times that we need mum and dad's hands slowly disappear.

We don't need to hold anyone's hand in the middle of the night. By eight or nine, we've got that covered. But, we are still in the dark about lots of other things in life.

With each passing year, we become more independent and able to cope, to handle, to say, I've got this. But, but what happens is this.

[3 : 34] This is what happens as we grow. Our independence in the routines of life gets to a point where we can look after ourselves. And, you know, in many ways, I'm not having, that's a great thing, isn't it?

I'm not having a go at that. We, you know, we need to be able to do, as adults, the basics of surviving. Have a roof over your head, put food on the table, and at some point, be independent from your parents.

That's good. We should celebrate that. The problem is that this independent way of life makes us feel like we can handle anything. Yet, at each moment, there are still things we don't understand or know how to handle.

It's changed from being waking in the dark. Now it's situations, circumstances, where our level of know-how, our life experience, leaves us in the dark with what to do.

As we get older, we all improve at problem-solving, figuring out, and navigate through a challenge, and come out the other side, maybe with a few scars, but, you know, we get through it. A bit more know-how, a bit more wisdom in that area of life.

[4 : 41] And, you know, we're designed and grow to understand, and think, and make sense of the world, and how we live. And yet, and yet, this is where, this is where I want to touch, you know, hone in on.

The ability to be independent in life is a great thing, but it can lead to something deadly if we bring that way of thinking to our spiritual life.

And here's why, because our ability to cope, our ability to fix problems, find solutions, what it do is, we can, we can make a mask that we, of our actual need for help.

It masks our need for, when we do need help, when we really need it. And it, and it also, you know, it can become part of our identity, can't it? That when, because what we want is, we want to be people who cope with whatever life throws us.

Neediness, being dependent on others, is a sign to everyone else that we can't cope. And it dents the image that we like to give off, portray, that we've got it all together.

[5 : 53] We can handle life. It masks our need that sometimes we're in, when we're in the dark, we need someone to light the way. This morning, we're going to see a picture of the most needy, dependent man that has ever walked the earth.

The most needy, dependent man that has ever walked the earth. And it wasn't, it wasn't a problem. It was, it was the best thing about him.

His needy dependence. It wasn't a weakness. It's why, it's why, he's the greatest man that ever lived. Let's turn with me to God's word.

page 738, chapter 50. This is what the Lord says. Where is your mother's certificate of divorce with which I sent her away?

Or to which of my creditors did I sell you? Because of your sins you were sold. Because of your transgressions your mother was sent away. When I came, why was there no one?

[6 : 59] When I called, why was there no one to answer? Was my arm too short to deliver you? Do I lack the strength to rescue you? By a mere rebuke I dry up the sea. I turn rivers into a desert.

Their fish rot for lack of water and die of thirst. I clothe the heavens with darkness and make sackcloth its covering. Verse 4, we get a change.

This is the servant. We're going to see the servant here from here on in. The sovereign Lord has given me a well-instructed tongue to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed.

The sovereign Lord has opened my ears. I have not been rebellious. I have not turned away. I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard. I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.

Because the sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore, have I set my face like flint and I know I will not be put to shame.

[8 : 03] He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other. Who is my accuser? Let him confront me. It is the sovereign Lord who helps me.

Who will condemn me? They will all wear out like a garment. Their moths will eat them up. Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the word of his servant. Let the one who walks in the dark who has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on their God.

But now, all you who light fires and provide yourselves with flaming torches, go. Walk in the light of your fires and of the torches you have set ablaze. This is what you shall receive from my hand.

You will lie down in torment. This is God's word. Amen. Now, last week, we saw that Israel had accused the living God of forgetting and abandoning them as a people.

And before we look at the identity of the servant that comes in verse 4, I just want to drill down into why this servant is needed. The reason? Because there is a crisis.

[9 : 12] There is a crisis that we see in verse 1. Because of your sins, he's saying to God's people, because of your sins you were sold, because of your transgressions your mother was sent away.

And the point being made is this. It's not that God sold them. He would never sell his people. They sold themselves.

They walked away. This is the adult version of trying to be that child who wants to be brave in the dark.

This is the adult version. They walked away, God's people walked away from holding their father's hand. It was offered to them, but they said, no, I can do this on my own. They walked away from his glory and they traded it in because all the nations that surrounded them, they thought, oh, it looks so much better the way they're doing things.

All the, you know, the plethora of a multitude of gods. Walking away when God came, there was no one there. It's the heart of the crisis.

[10 : 23] This is the parent and child in the dark flipped upside down. What happens is, God hears the call of his children in the dark, but when he gets there, there's no child there.

There's no one to hold his hand when he offers it to them. The child, the children, are gone. Look with me. Verse two, when I came, why was there no one?

When I called, why was there no one to answer? Was my arm too short to deliver you? Israel, God's children. did you not believe that I would come for you?

And I've come, I'm here, and there's no one there. His child nation have become so independent that they no longer recognize their father's voice or wait for him to show up.

A child who doesn't answer their parent, who stops answering the phone, they're the ones severing the relationship. Silence becomes a non-existent relationship because it's all one side.

[11 : 35] It's the father's trying, but they're saying, no, we don't need you. The crisis ends in a vacuum. There is no man. There is no one in Israel who will listen to their God and it is into that void, into that void, that vacuum, that we suddenly hear a voice speak.

There is one man who is a man of Israel who will answer. The servant is the man who will finally answer the father's call.

In the darkness, he reaches for his father's hand. And the life of the servant that we will see could not be more different to that of independent Israel.

The servant is needy and dependent in every area of life, of ministry, just day by day, in the work of salvation. What we see here is the song of the servant.

It's the song of the perfect servant of the Lord who will come in the person of Jesus Christ and perfectly fulfill this song in his life and death and resurrection.

[12 : 45] It's the pattern of the dependent servant. It's the pattern. It's the life of Jesus written, predicted, the song that Jesus will sing in the way that he lives written hundreds of years before he arrived.

So the principle that we're going to see is that to be the servant of the Lord is the life of daily dependency. Right from the off, this is not dependency for a special moment like I really need God because I'm going through some terrible thing.

No, no, no. This is ordinary daily life dependence and neediness for every single waking moment. Look with me what verse 4, this is the servant speaking, this is kind of Jesus speaking.

He says, the sovereign Lord has given me a well-instructed tongue to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed.

Morning by morning, every day, the servant of the Lord relies on his God to give him the words to say. Morning by morning, he wakes, tuning his ear to the living God waiting and listening, turning in his ear saying, what would you have me do today?

[14 : 10] He receives wisdom from the living God to how to live and then he passes that on. He hears it, that's what we see in the second of the verse.

He's listening to his Lord like one being instructed and then his tongue, what he says, that same word, he's got the instructed tongue coming from what he's heard from God his Father, he speaks out to the world.

His well-instructed tongue comes from his well-instructed ear, sustaining the weary who need to hear a word from the living God. What it says is that Jesus himself can't utter a word to anyone without starting his day by listening to his Father.

It's incredible the amount of dependency that Jesus has on his Father. Can't utter a word. That's the first thing about his speech morning by morning.

The second is that he's not just dependent for what he speaks and how he listens but he's also dependent on how he lives. Verse 5, we see that Jesus' righteous life, a life that turns away from sin and lives perfectly.

[15 : 26] Look with me, verse 5, the sovereign Lord has opened my ears and the result of listening, I have not been rebellious, I have not turned away.

All the temptations come at Jesus. All the temptations that we encounter in this life come at Jesus in his life. The desire to be independent, this desire to look like we've got it all together.

Jesus was tempted that way. He was tempted just as we are with lust, with pride, to do things without the Father, to choose any other way, tempted to rebel and turn his back.

But Jesus' ears have been opened by the Lord every single morning to listen, this is what faithful living looks like today, son. Every day, he must choose to live righteously, being sustained and dependent on his Father.

It's very striking, I think, that every part of Jesus' life, he is completely needy. From what to say, how to use his mouth, to make real choices about when to say, about how to say no to sin, yes to the righteous life.

[16 : 45] And here, when we read that, I think it's quite striking. You think, how is Jesus needing to be, how does that work? Here's a thought. If the God-man, you know, the one who's involved right at the beginning of time, creating the universe, if the God-man needed to open his ear to the Lord to know what to say, if he needed to depend on his Father to resist temptation, if the God-man needed that, how much more do we need to be needy on God?

How much more do we need to depend on the living God to know what to say, to resist temptation? It suggests that apart from the living God, we will not be able to listen, to know what he says.

Apart from the living God, we will not know how to speak, to be able to walk in line with what God wants for us. It is inevitable that if we're not needy on him, we will turn to the path of least resistance and our tongues will revert to self-defense, worldly wisdom, speaking without thinking, gossip is attractive, we will have no words for the weary if we don't depend on the living God to know how to say, because Jesus needed to do that every single day of his life.

It's astonishing, the level of neediness. In our world, this would be, neediness is not a quality that is sort of, it's not something you put on your CV, is it?

Really needy. You'd say, no, that's a terrible thing, being needy. But here, this is the quality of being a servant. Here's where things get real.

[18 : 54] Because the dependent neediness of Jesus, yes, it was for his life every day, but it was far more than just a morning by morning quiet time to set the day off right before he headed off into the day.

You see, what we see is that Jesus needed the presence of his father all the time. If that presence ever disappeared, Jesus never would have made it to Calvary. There's a move here.

The temperature of this song all of a sudden ramps up in its heat. Because what we see is Jesus needed his father for every day and he especially needed him to make it to the cross.

Because he was needed and dependent in his suffering. It flows out. What we have is the sovereign Lord opens Jesus' ears.

He's able to live righteously. But verse 6, look what else he needed to hear to get through. Verse 6.

[19 : 59] Jesus hears from his father and that enables verse 6 to be fulfilled. I offered my back to those who beat me. My cheeks to those who pulled out my beard.

I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. Jesus needed help. Verse 7, he says, because the Lord, the sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced.

Therefore, have I set my face like flint and I know I will not be put to shame. Jesus was given strength. He had to depend on his father to get through his trial.

As his beard was pulled, as he was laughed at called name Spam, God the father was holding his son's hand, helping him. That's the reality, is that without that, Jesus would not have been able to see this through.

You see the power of the father's hand, the sustaining voice, the help that Jesus is able to set his face like flint.

[21 : 20] It means setting your face in stone towards the direction, the journey where God wants for him. It's set in stone to get to the outcome. Eyes only on making it to the cross.

The spitting didn't matter because he knew his father's smile. Jesus said as much himself in John 16, this is what he says, he says to his disciples the night before, he says the time is coming when you will be scattered.

I can't depend on you lot because you're going to do one. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone for my father is with me.

When false charges are brought against him as the voice of his father's vindication ringing in his ears. Verse 8, he who vindicates me is near.

Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other. Who's my accuser? Let him confront me. It's the sovereign Lord who helps me again. Who will condemn me? They will all wear out like a garment the moths will eat them up.

[22 : 27] Like an old garment that's been left in an old wardrobe and you find it covered in holes where the moths have been eating it. If you've ever had that, very frustrating. My accusers, those confronting me, that's what they'll be like, they'll come to nothing.

Jesus hears the vindicating voice of his father, that's all that matters, he can switch it off. He doesn't need to defend himself, he can be silent because his father already Christ, the son of God who's empowered by complete needy dependence for every moment on his life and his father who holds his hand all the way until one moment until the cross is erected.

He holds his hand all the way and then the most unimaginable thing that Jesus has been fearing happens the father pulls his hand away and folds his arms.

He tugs his hand away from the father's grasps and now stands with a glare of anger at the sin that Jesus carries. The smile of favour has gone.

The sky turns black. Jesus calls out in the darkness like that little child and there is no answer. It's the charges for our sin, our mess.

[24 : 11] It's placed on him. And you see how these verses when it's in the trial they all make sense but when he's on the cross they take on a different vibe because he is accused he is charged he is confronted and his body will wear out like an old garment it will decay and be thrown on the scrap heap and the sovereign lord can't help him on this one.

he's not accused by the trial of Jews but he's accused by his own father.

He's condemned by him. Why? It's so that when we call out in the darkness when we call out to God the father he will never hold his hand back.

His hand his embrace will always be there because the father took his hand away from the son.

He'll always be there. We can always depend on him. We started and throughout we've thought about this ourselves in a former time depending on a parent needing a parent to be there in the middle of the night.

[26 : 06] I want to repeat that question. If the Lord Jesus needed to hold his father's hand every moment of his life, how much more do we? Now, when you hear this, you might expect that the response to it might seem obvious, but what we see, and we see this in the passage to God's await with the Israelites, but we see this in our world, that there is two responses to hearing the offer of God the Father holding out his hand.

And we're going to see two. We see the response of the God-fearer, which we're going to see in verse 10, and then we're going to see the response of the fire-kindler.

You'll see what that means in verse 11. Verse 10, look with me. Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the word of his servant? Let the one who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the Lord and rely on their God.

In other words, that sounds like somebody's in darkness, it's saying, let the one who knows they're surrounded by darkness, the one who knows they don't have the light to lead the way themselves, who knows they're still a child and need their parent, let the one who knows that and believes that, call on the Lord.

calling on the Lord is active faith. When difficulty and darkness surround you, it is knowing that you need the Lord to lead you out of it, that you need him to grab you by the hand and lead you.

[27 : 51] You're needy for him. It's darkness, you can't create your own light. That's what fearing him and obeying the word of the servant looks like. The word of the servant is the word of the Lord because that's who the servant hears it from.

This is kind of, when we hear all about the servant, this is where the rubber hits the road with us today, how are we going to respond to this servant?

And considering that what this is really grabbing our attention is if Jesus needed to throw his whole self on the Lord, it's implying that that's what we need to do, to throw your whole self upon Jesus, not just part of you, not just the difficult bits, but that all of your life, your whole life, morning by morning, day to day, doing that is the place of being fully alive and being fully known and it is the place of faith.

When you don't know what to do, when you're in darkness, he leads the way. He is the one who's present with you by his spirit, the one that never leaves, he holds your hand and leaves you for the valley of the shadow of death where you'll fear no evil, where his rod and his staff will comfort you and goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life.

When you don't know how to pray, when you don't feel like coming to church or even being around Christians, when you feel lonely, when you fear for the health of a friend, a relative or maybe your own health, in the darkness, call out to Jesus and he will come and he will hold your hand and he will guide you through.

[29 : 48] That's the response. The first one. The other response is the response of the fire kindler because what about that young child that stops calling?

Now, it might be because they've matured and your comfort to them has made them understand they've got nothing to worry about. But what if it's trying to be brave, trying to do life and look good for mum and dad in the morning when actually deep down they still need their parents?

The response of the fire kindler, look with me, but now all you who light fires and provide yourselves with flaming torches, go walk in the light of your fires and of the torches you've set ablaze.

See, the difference is here is the darkness is still there, but instead of relying on the light of God, wanting his hand to lead the way, the fire kindler makes his own light to lead his own way out.

It's the torch of self-sufficiency. trying to be brave, acting like we've got it all together, that we don't need anyone and we don't need God. Inside we're hurting, but we say the usual when somebody asks us how you're doing, oh I'm fine, when we're asked, you know, I'm fine, things are great, when inside we're suffering in the dark, we hold on to the burden and the pride that people look at us as copers, when inside we're less than okay.

[31 : 29] We light our own torches. We were never meant to carry our own torches. We're never meant to try and get through life on our own.

It's Jesus' light that we're meant for. Even in the church, God provides light by putting us in a body by helping us to support one another. So that if we've got stuff that we're going through that's hard, if there's darkness surrounding us, he's given us the light that shines from other people to help us.

That's God working through other people to lead us through. And then the sting comes, the last part of the verse.

If we live like that, this is what you shall receive from my hand, you will lie down in torment. And you see, what he's getting at is that if you walk through life without ever needing God, then of course he won't be there for you.

Because eternal life is just a continuation continuation of the life you lived here. Eternal life will look in some ways like just a continuation of what you wanted here.

[32 : 57] If you wanted a life without needing God here, then why would you get a life eternally where God just shows up? you know, the life without God here is torment because you're trying to do it when you really need help, so you're tormented here, which means life with God eternally is just a continuation of what you wanted anyway.

It's not arbitrary, but you receive what you lived. You wanted independence from God, you receive independence from God eternally. So as we draw in for a close, I just want to sum things up that what we've seen is that Jesus Christ was led by the hand of his Father morning by morning his whole life up until it was taken away.

It was taken away so that it would always be there for you and I. That when we call him he would always be there to lead us, to strengthen us, to be there, present in the times of joy and the times of sorrow or even in the darkest moments.

And I want you to know, this is what I want you to know today, that his hand is there for you today. His hand is reaching out for you to take hold of again.

And whatever is going on, wherever you're at in life, if you've never taken hold of the hand of Jesus, he's holding it out for you too.

[34 : 42] He's holding it out for you to take hold of for the first time. And he promises that if you hold his hand that he'll never let go of it. Like that child in the middle of the night, he will be the parent that always comes.

in this life, and then by the presence of his spirit, that's how it works.

But in the next life, when you see him face to face, you'll get to hold that hand for real. let me pray.

Loving heavenly father, father, I just thank you so much that your hand is always there.

you know the darkness that surrounds us in life. You know the times and we're sorry for the times when we've tried to do things on our own without you.

[35 : 59] You know the times when we try to want to appear to others like we've got it all together and we're sorry because we just wear a mask.

And I just want to take that mask off and we just want you to come we just want you there and we want to take hold of your hand all the time.

And so I pray that you would lead us by your light in the whole of our lives. You teach us and guide us and strengthen us and be there and that you'd be teaching us how to live and what it means to live as a follower of you.

I thank you that your son Jesus was willing to let go of your hand so that you would never let go of ours.

That he was willing to receive the anger that you would shower on him because of our sin.

[37 : 07] And so we pray that you bless us and help us and equip us to follow you all the days of our life. We ask for this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.