

# His garden will bloom forever

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, it's time for our time in God's Word when we're going to think about as the kids go to a kids' church and have time to consider big truths that they can grow in so we can spend time looking at the Bible together and thinking about what it means.

We're in Isaiah 49 today, so if you want to turn, it's on page 736. We're in a big series going from Isaiah 40 to 55, but this is our last one for the year in Isaiah.

We're taking a break to think about Christmas. You know, because next week is the first kind of, there's only four Sundays before Christmas from next one, so we'll have four weeks thinking about that and we've got carols and all sorts coming up.

We're in Isaiah 49, we're looking at verses 1 to 13. I'm going to pray for us to begin with. Almighty God, we do thank you that we can come to your Word, the Bible, again, and we thank you that you want to speak to us through your Word.

We thank you that this is the way that you've designed to communicate with us so powerfully. And so we pray for the power of your Spirit. We pray that you'd move our hearts. We pray that you'd, where we need to be taught, where we need to be rebuked and corrected and when we need to be transformed.

[ 1 : 29 ] We pray for your blessing upon us, that we as your servants might be equipped for every good work, that we might be trained to serve you in goodness, mercy and peace.

We ask for your blessing now in Jesus' name. Amen. So as I mentioned, this is our final one in Isaiah. And in many ways, it's kind of the whole series is one of the pivotal passages in Isaiah 45, because within it, there's four different songs.

They're called servant songs. And they're sung by an unknown mystery individual at this point, something called the servant of the Lord, the servant of the Lord.

And when we read it, which we'll do in a second, just to kind of clue you in what we're going to read. It is his voice, the voice of the servant of the Lord, that is speaking.

And the servant of the Lord, he's speaking about his purpose. He's speaking about his identity. And he's speaking, singing, maybe, what the living God will do through him.

[ 2 : 34 ] This unknown mystery individual. These four songs, they're kind of central, actually, not just to the bit that we're looking at. But the whole of Isaiah, because what they demonstrate is that God's salvation plan is bigger than actually just you and me.

But actually, God's salvation plan has cosmic ramifications. Cosmic. And in Isaiah, salvation, there's this, you know, there's lots of ways, sort of nuances that we can think about what salvation is, redemption.

But here, what in Isaiah, it's the restoration of justice. The restoration of justice. That's what salvation is. But justice is, justice not as we would think about it.

It is biblical justice. You see, when the God of the Bible speaks about justice, those of you who want to look this up, it's the Hebrew word mishpat. Mishpat. I'm not going to, I always, for some reason, don't remember much, but remember that.

It's called mishpat. But when we hear that, it's more than dishing out punishments for crimes and appeasing victims. Which is what we love when we think about justice, isn't it? The justice system.

[ 3 : 50 ] Biblical justice is God restoring creation to what it should be. Restoring the world to be like the kingdom of God, where there is justice because the kingdom of God rules, it reigns, and the world becomes the perfect, just society.

It's perfectly just. That's when justice comes. Salvation is framed in these terms because it's what we're saved from. It's now saved from a disordered, imperfect, unjust world to a perfect, just kingdom we've got at the helm.

It is restoring the divine order. We know our world is far from that. It is disorderly and unjust and we feel it. The mission, this is what we're going to go into.

The mission and purpose of God's servant is to bring about this God's just kingdom as a reality. So we pray, isn't it? Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Bring the kingdom of God. Bring the just society. Bring the divine order as it's supposed to be. Restore creation. The kingdom of God, the order, just true kingdom is what we are actually all long for.

[ 5 : 08 ] It's what we wish the world is like. And when the servant does that, what we see is when the servant comes in and brings that about, this servant, it is his purpose.

It is his meaning. It's why he comes. Now, what I want us to get from today is as we see this purpose of him bringing this about, what we realize is that ingrained in every human, in all of us, in humanity, we all have a desire for purpose and meaning, don't we?

We all have that. We have a desire to be satisfied with life. We want to know where we're headed. You know, this passage, as we see the purpose and the meaning of the servant, it actually gives us the answers of what are we living for?

It gives us the framework of God's design for us. And as we see the purpose of the servant, we see our purpose can be fulfilled in this servant.

And so if you've ever asked, if you've ever asked, and I know I have, what am I supposed to be doing with my life? If you've ever had that feeling when the alarm goes off in the morning and ask, does what I do today even matter?

[ 6 : 31 ] God's word right here says that it does. And it's stated right here in black and white, that your daily grind is actually part, can actually be part, of God's cosmic plan to restore the world as it was meant to be.

Let's see what the Lord of heaven and earth has to say to us. Verse 49, chapter 49, verse 1, page 736.

This is God's word. Listen to me, you islands. Hear this, you distant nations. Before I was born, the Lord called me.

From my mother's womb, he has spoken my name. He made my mouth like a sharpened sword. In the shadow of his hand, he hid me. He made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver.

He said to me, you are my servant Israel, in whom I will display my splendor. But I said, I have labored in vain.

[ 7 : 35 ] I have spent my strength for nothing at all. Yet what is due to me is in the Lord's hand, and my reward is with my God. And now the Lord says, he who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself.

For I am honored in the eyes of the Lord, and my strength, my God has been my strength. He says, it is too small a thing for you to be my servant, to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept.

I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth. This is what the Lord says, the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel, to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers.

Kings will see you and stand up. Princes will see and bow down, because of the Lord who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen you. This is what the Lord says, In the time of my favor I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you.

I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people, to restore the land and to reassign its desolate inheritances, to say to the captives, come out, and to those in darkness, be free.

[ 8 : 55 ] They will feed beside the roads and find pasture on every barren hill. They will neither hunger nor thirst, nor the desert heat or the sun beat down on them. He who has compassion on them will guide them, and lead them beside springs of water.

I will turn all my mountains into rows, and my highways will be raised up. See, they will come from afar, some from the north, some from the west, some from the regions of Aswan.

Shout for joy, you heavens. Rejoice, you earth. Burst into song, you mountains. For the Lord comforts his people, and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.

God's design is for this servant to bring order to a chaotic world.

There are two ideas we need to explore, I think, going into this passage. Two things. What does it mean to be a servant of the Lord? And what does it mean to restore divine order?

[ 10 : 04 ] We'll go with the second one first. Restore divine order. Restoring order, as we've said, it's really right at the heart of God's mission to his world. I mentioned that word mishpat, it's God's just divine order.

And creation, in the beginning, Genesis 1, was instituted with an order, as God intended. The order was a pyramid. It had God at the top, it had humanity second, and then the rest of creation was at the bottom.

That was the order. The living God in charge, rule, he's king over all things. But then humanity second, he gives humanity dominion over everything else.

With everything creation at the bottom. That's the divine order, the way that creation was set up to be. That order was flipped after Genesis 3.

Adam and Eve, we know the story, disobey God. They don't do as he commanded. And what they do is, it flips to be not like a pyramid, but like an ice cream cone. Creation is now at the top, ruling.

[ 11 : 09 ] That's what we idolise. Humanity is second. And God is now in last place. He ends up rock bottom. The mission, therefore, God's mission is to restore the right order.

To put himself back in his rightful place. When that order is restored, when creation becomes like it was intended, our world flourishes. And we flourish as intended.

We live out truly what it means to be an image bearer. Like a master gardener who tends perfectly to every flower, every rose bush, every beautiful bit of flora and fauna, every colour blooming, teeming with life as the gardener intended.

Not a stone unturned, perfect beauty to behold. The living God is the master gardener. That's how he created Eden. Humanity and all creation flourished, excelled.

To restore divine order is to get back to that. That's what it means, to restore divine order. Second thing. What about being the servant of the Lord?

[ 12 : 20 ] For starters, I suppose it's worth saying it goes beyond any role. Rather, what it is, is to participate, you might say, to ensure that God's mission succeed in bringing about what he desires.

To be the master gardener that tends to the world like his garden project. But being brought rather to be like Eden, but to be greater than Eden.

To be the kingdom of God for earth to become like heaven. There is only, there is only ever, has ever, and will be only ever, one person who fits the bill of the servant of the Lord.

It's the Lord Jesus Christ. That's who is speaking in this passage before his arrival, even before his birth. He is the one speaking. God the Son is speaking.

What's going to happen? Who is this servant that's going to come and bring this about? The servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, his purpose, his mission, aligns with that of the living God. To restore a just, perfect society, a mishpat society, a kingdom with God at the helm.

[ 13 : 27 ] The perfect, ordered garden. This passage is all about Jesus. The true servant of the Lord that Israel needed and who we need. In the past, many times as we've been going through this with Israel, you might have heard me say, where Israel failed, Jesus succeeds.

That's only kind of half true. It's not strictly true. Because actually Jesus doesn't replace Israel. He himself is an Israelite.

And so in him, Israel does actually succeed. He's the king. He's kind of the one who represents the whole nation. Israel completes God's mission and purpose to be a light to the nations, a covenant to the people through Jesus, the true Israelite.

Israel becomes the real deal in Jesus. And we see it's all about him. In the opening verses, we have God the Son speaking through Isaiah of his future arrival.

You see what he says? Verse 1. Look with me. Even his entry into our world was not random, but planned perfectly as the climax of salvation. See what it says?

[ 14 : 44 ] Before I was born. Second half of verse. Before I was born, the Lord called me from my mother's womb. He's spoken my name. Even in Mary, whereas he's growing in Mary, even when Mary's pregnant, the true servant Jesus has his appointed task set before him.

Don't you remember Luke 2? He's named in the womb. That's what it tells us. He's spoken. His name is given. The angel tells Mary his name is going to be Jesus, which means God saves.

Yeshua, Jesus, means salvation. It's the word used for salvation in the whole of the Old Testament. We see the words of this servant will be a weapon.

Verse 2. He made my mouth like a sharpened sword. In the shadow of his hand, he hid me. He made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver.

Like a sword, effective, sharpened all the way to the hilt, effective and able to penetrate. Like an arrow that flies with perfect precision.

[ 15 : 50 ] polished, going, cutting straight through the air, precise and accurate. This servant's words will begin to bring that order about.

And his purpose, the mission, comprehensive. Not just to Israel, but extended to every nation. The Lord speaks.

Look with me. Verse 6. See what he says about the mission? He said, it's too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I've kept.

See what he's saying? He's like, that's too small. Like you can, we can restore Israel and the tribes of Jacob, but that's not, that's not the extent of my mission. That's too small a thing. I'm the God of the heavens and the earth.

No. I will make you servant of the Lord, my son, a light for the Gentiles, a light to the nations, that my salvation, my Yeshua, may reach to the ends of the earth.

[ 16 : 53 ] To focus on Israel only, that's too small an issue. No, Jesus will be a light to the whole world. The master Garner will water every nation with his word and every nation will come into full bloom.

God's world will one day have divine order restored through his mission, through his servant. And through Jesus, God will be glorified. He's the true image.

Uniquely able to be the true likeness, the true image of God, the servant of the Lord in our world. Without Jesus, Israel are incomplete and unable to do this.

They're unable to do, fill this purpose. They don't have what it takes to make this happen. It's why Jesus, the servant, is so necessary. Because the problem is, problem statement, you might say, Israel are an incomplete servant unable to restore order.

They're incomplete. notice with me the words that come out of the servant's mouth that could quite easily have come out of Israel's.

[ 18 : 14 ] What's happening here is Jesus identifying with their lament. Look with me, verse 4. But I said, I have laboured in vain.

I have spent my strength for nothing at all. Israel without Jesus, if they attempt to dig up the weeds, the areas where the garden has become disordered, to restore order in the garden, the weeds go too deep.

One of the most difficult weeds to remove, I was looking up, it's one called field bindweed. Now, I'm no sort of horticulturalist, but did some research. Its root system is so intertwining, meaning that you might see this weed pop up in different places, but actually it's the same plant.

And the roots go 20 feet deep. And you might have it in 20 places, but they're all connected 20 feet under the ground. And even if a tiny fragment of the root gets left behind, a new plant will grow producing thousands of seeds.

Basically, if you get field bindweed, you're never getting rid of it. You're just never getting rid of it. You try to tackle it, you'd think you'd gotten rid of it, and it just would come back again and again and again.

[ 19 : 42 ] It would just feel like a waste of time, wouldn't it? I've laboured, it would feel exactly like these words, I've laboured in vain. I've spent my strength, nothing at all. Still coming back. That's what it is like trying to create divine order without Jesus.

That's his purpose that he's uniquely equipped for. We need purpose. We need a reason to wake up in the morning, but when our efforts don't bring what we expect, our motivation quickly wanes.

And there are times when we wonder if we've misunderstood the whole thing. Maybe we start to ask, maybe, where's the problem? Is there something wrong with me?

And when that is our experience, which it will be at some point, at a heart level we fall into two ways of thinking. And both are connected to we base success on our own ability.

We base success on our own ability. Either we think we've failed because we haven't done enough, or we didn't do it right. It reveals that the belief that we thought success rested on us.

[ 21 : 09 ] That belief is exhausting. It brings burnout and weariness. You feel shame when it looks like failure, despair when all your efforts seem to fall flat and resentment towards others who you don't feel do as much as you.

That's one option. You feel like success rests on what you do. The alternative kind of stems from the same belief really, but the alternative is believing you've got nothing to offer that will make any difference.

And when we believe that, what we normally do is we talk to ourselves with kind of those defeating absolutist statements. I can't talk in the right way.

I'll do more harm than good. No one listens to what I've got to say given the state of my life. What have I got to offer? I've got my own battles to sort. I could never be a light to anyone. I can't offer anything.

And the more you go down that rabbit hole, the more destructive it becomes. And you feel this sense of unworthiness. Those lies that you can't do anything, they're lies from the pit of hell.

[ 22 : 25 ] success does not rest on you. But the despair we feel pushes us to the edge and we feel like giving up or never even getting started.

Now, before we move on to the next kind of bit, I just want to affirm something for you. if you've ever felt like your efforts are in vain, if you've ever felt like maybe even in your walk with Jesus, like you've poured yourself out for him and it's come to nothing.

And even in your walk with Jesus, if you've ever felt like looked down on by people who don't follow him or who smirk at what you believe, maybe even talked about you behind your back, if you've ever felt like that, you're actually in good company.

because that's exactly what the cross shaped life looks like. And it's the exact pattern of the gospel.

Because the gospel is the servant who comes to restore divine order, restores it in a way that you never expect. You see, he's not a dictator.

[ 23 : 50 ] He doesn't bring in this divine order by demanding it, actually. No, he brings it up by the opposite happens. You see, the servant of the Lord, what happens to him is what we read about in verse 7.

The servant is despised and abhorred and he does that to restore divine order. See that? Him who was despised and abhorred by the nation. The gospel life framed for us is one which looks like failure.

The true servant despised, rejected to bring the true order. The cross looks like verse 4, doesn't it? It looks like labour ending in defeat. It looks like Jesus spent his strength for nothing at all at the end of his life.

That's what it looks like. His whole life was Calvary shaped, despised, attempts on his life from the moment he arrives as a baby. And God protects him, he makes it through all that.

And at the end, the actual Calvary moment just looks pitiful. Just another renegade upstart, dying like every other before him. But here it is.

[ 25 : 05 ] Jesus took the ultimate futility, the ultimate pitiful death of the cross.

He took the feeling that God had abandoned his work, had abandoned his labour so that your work could have ultimate significance. He was spent for nothing so that you could be rewarded.

And what we see is the servant knows it's not going to be the end of the story. He knows actually that it wasn't for nothing because he knows that his vindication is going to come.

He knows that his humiliation on the cross and vindication will come through resurrection and that will be the means that his purpose brings the fruit that he actually desires.

It means that there is a means of pulling up the impossible weeds that have taken root in every part of creation. Look with me, verse 4, after he said, I've lived in vain, see what he says, yet what is due to me is in the Lord's hand and my reward is with my God.

[ 26 : 34 ] Verse 5, second half of verse 5, for I am honoured in the eyes of the Lord and my God has been my strength. Verse 7, end of verse 7, kings will see you and stand up, princes will see and bow down.

This is the Lord speaking to his servant, because of the Lord who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen you. Jesus, the servant of the Lord will be exalted, even the highest in society will bow down to him and the result, the completion of the mission, the purpose into fruition, the restoration of justice, of a just ordered kingdom society, the kingdom of God on earth.

And because the servant is vindicated, we have vindicated. Here's the thing to remember, our status with the living God isn't determined by the immediate results of our labour, it's determined by his resurrection.

His vindication guaranteed by his resurrection from the dead is guaranteed that that's what we receive and we see here what it means, the impact is cosmic.

Verse 8, the land is restored. Verse 9, the captives are freed and fed, never hungering or thirsty. Verse 10, they're protected from the effects of our world, they're led and guided to springs of water.

[ 28 : 05 ] Verse 11, the difficult paths made easy, mountains turned into roads. it will be comprehensive with people coming from every nation. Verse 12, from north, from west, from east, from afar, from every region.

And with them all bursting into praise, verse 13, with comfort the status core. when the kingdom of God is in place, brought about by the work of the servant, the consequences reach beyond what we can comprehend.

People flourish, blossom, the garden blooms, as it was intended. It's a recreated garden, better than Eden, blooming once again.

Knowing that Jesus the servant fulfills this purpose gives us clarity on our own. Because we're in him, we find our purpose in him.

And this is how we respond, this is how we live in light of the cross. We, the church, are God's people, we are the continuation of Israel, where the continuation to restore divine order as the servant of the Lord continues his work through us.

[ 29 : 34 ] This kingdom, the kingdom of God, is actually the kingdom that we belong to. It's the continue of Israel, the church, and Jesus has secured our place in it, our citizenship. That is the people to whom we belong, and because we belong to that people, we're given his kingdom purpose.

Not in a way that depends on us, but because Jesus is still bringing about through us. You know, Jesus' purpose and goal, they've never changed. They've never changed.

You know, the purpose is still the same today, to continue bringing about the kingdom of God through us. The question is how does he do this now in the church? Often we might think, well, wouldn't it have been better if Jesus had stayed?

Could have done worse, you know? He impacted so many people when he was in his earthly life. It would have taken him a very long time doing it on his own. Jesus' ascension into heaven and sending his spirit at Pentecost was necessary, so that he could deliver and keep laboring and keep bringing about his purpose through the church, through his people, through us.

The key point is this, we do not and never will become the servant of the Lord. We never can. Jesus is always and will always be the only person capable of uniquely fulfilling that role and achieving that true servant purpose.

[ 31 : 07 ] But as the servant, he is still completing and fulfilling his servant work today. He's still ordering the world as it should be and he's doing it one person at a time as he changes people's hearts, our hearts, as he digs up the weeds that have rooted in us, as he feeds us, as he frees us, as he answers the prayer when we pray your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Jesus, the servant of the Lord, is still living and active with divine purpose but now through us by his spirit. this is a spirit reality, led reality.

You see what it means? It means that our labour is never in vain. Our strength is never spent for nothing. There's no such thing as failure. There's no shame and there's no resentment towards others.

And what it means is you have so much to offer. No matter how little you feel you're worth, your worth doesn't come from how you feel or your past.

Your worth comes because you're made acceptable in the sight of Almighty God. Whether you feel that or can't, in some ways whether we feel it or we don't, this is not a status that gets changed by how we feel.

[ 32 : 39 ] It's a reality that's true. God accepts you. and says your worth, this is how much you're worth, you're worth me sending my son for you to die for you.

That's how much you're worth. You have an infinite worth placed on your life. That's how much I value you. Our labour is never in vain.

The little we do is glorious in his sight. It means that he works through the awkward invite to someone to come to church. He works through the reluctant offer of prayer to a neighbour.

He's restoring divine order in ways we don't realise. When at work you choose to honour a colleague instead of joining in with gossip. When instead of taking shortcuts in your work with integrity, maybe you working on someone's house, you work on the house like it belongs to Jesus.

He's restoring divine order. He works in powerful ways you can never imagine. We started talking, we talked the whole time, about purpose. The what's the point questions get answered because your purpose is not really about we think we love to have our purpose written in the clouds tell us what job we're going to have, where we're going to live, who we're going to get married to, how many kids we should have.

[ 34 : 07 ] No, that's not the purpose. The living God gives you freedom of choice to make those decisions. You're free to choose. The purpose really is whatever you do, it comes in Colossians 3 twice.

Paul writes, whatever you do, whatever you do, whether in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. He says again, whatever you do, work it with all your heart as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you'll receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.

It's the Lord Christ you're serving. Whatever you do, you're free to do. You're free to get up every morning and do it as long as you do it in the name of Jesus. That's your purpose in this life.

You can have that overall principle governed every day you get up. So when you get up and think of what is the point of today, this is your point of today to serve the Lord Jesus as if he's your master, to do everything as if he's specifically given you the direct command to do it.

Perhaps it's a mantra, a purpose, today I'm going to live by the power of God's spirit, to live as if he's the Lord who's telling me to do everything, in order to draw people towards him, in order to live in a way that models God is in charge, I'm under him and the creation is third, to live with the life as a pyramid rather than an ice cream cone.

[ 35 : 46 ] If you live like that, if how you speak, if how you act, the decisions you make, your family, your church, your life, with Jesus as Lord, if you live that life, it will draw people towards the living God, because that purpose aligns with that of Jesus Christ.

That's your purpose, everything you do, do it for Jesus, divine order right there. The kingdom of God will burst out of you. And you see what happens?



It has cosmic ramifications. The response to the divine purpose, verse 13, shout for joy, you heavens, rejoice, you earth, burst into song, you mountains.

The creation bursts into song, because the divine order is not just about you and me, it's about the whole of the created order, coming back to how it was supposed to be.

When it's established, we live in line with our God intended purpose, we flourish we bloom. Living with a God-shaped purpose becomes our reality, and like Jesus, we're rewarded, honoured, and vindicated.

[ 37 : 05 ] The heavens and the earth, and everything in between, are impacted because of how you live as a spirit-empowered kingdom citizen. As we draw in for a close, as we come in for landing, the servant of the Lord, let's remind ourselves, comes to restore the world as it was meant to be, to bring about the just kingdom.

The completion is still underway, the servant is still at work through you to make it happen. If you ask those questions about purpose, you know, the living God is here to call you out to live that purpose yourself.

if you've never had that purpose, he calls us to follow him today, that that purpose can be your purpose in him.

If you struggle for purpose and meaning, let this, the purpose of the servant of the Lord, be your purpose in him. Let's pray.

Amen. Almighty God, we thank you for the Lord Jesus, the servant of the Lord.

[ 38 : 33 ] We thank you for your plan of salvation. We thank you that you labored, that you died a death that looked futile and nothing, so that all our efforts would be rewarded.

We praise you that your gospel plan is uprooting the weeds that have marred the whole of creation, so that one day earth will be made new, that earth will be like heaven.

And Lord, we know each of us has those days and we feel flat and we feel what's the point and we struggle. But Lord, I pray that for each of us you would help us to adopt this spirit-led reality, that we have a purpose to bring about this just order in small ways that we might not think they're much, but they're big things.

Help us to live with you as in charge, so that whatever we do, we do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, doing it for you, knowing that through us you're bringing it about, one person at a time, bringing the order that looks like you on top, you in charge of the whole cosmos.

We ask for all of this in the name of Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.