

# Advent - Love

△ Isaiah 43, Luke 2:21-40

## Intro

### The theme today is Love

But the readings offered do not seem to give a handle on the definition of Love

Unlike some other readings like 1 Cor 13, or 1 John

Which seem to be all about love

So how can we do this?

### Isaiah 42 or 43?

I based this on Isaiah 43

Which is the less familiar one!

## How does society define and measure love

Perhaps here a dictionary answer may be appropriate

### And that is quite difficult

Oxford English Dictionary (OED) gives seven answers for the meaning of

Senses related to affection and attachment

Taking love of games of skill or chance

seperate

1. A feeling or disposition of deep affection or fondness for someone

2. the benevolence and affection of God towards an individual or towards creation;

3. Strong predilection, liking, or fondness of, or devotion to

4. An intense feeling of romantic attachment based on an attraction felt by one person for another

5. Sexual desire or lust

6. A person who is beloved of another

7. The personification of romantic or sexual affection, more or less identified with the Eros, Amor, or Cupid of Classical mythology

The secular concept of love is not easy to define

That's why there are so many movies, novels, plays about love

And how we mistake it

How we fail to express it

How it is not returned

How it can turn to anger or even hate

How does God's word define love?

In the bible the word or concept of love is often restricted to Greek term Agape

It is not familial, romantic or between friends

It is love that is formed out of a decision

It is not an emotion

which is the OEDs version

It is an act of someone's will

## Challenges?

That is often defines the life of a Christian

Loving someone you do not like

Loving to do something you do not want to do

And not used as being friendly to them, but by really helping them or forgiving them, and interacting with them

That is quite hard - for all of us

It is the basis of the 10 commandments

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind"

^ Matthew 22:37

"Love your neighbour as yourself"

^ Matthew 22:39

And we find that we still cannot do this by ourselves

## Where do Isaiah 43 and Luke 2:21-40 intersect

That is not so easy

They do not seem to refer to each other

But still there is a theme

## Isaiah 43 speaks about the love of God for the people of Israel

The first part: 1-7 speaks about the Love of God

### Actions

Israel is God's creation

Israel is redeemed by God

Israel is protected by God

God would exchange other nations, like Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba for Israel

Israel is precious and honoured in God's sight

Israel does not need to fear

God will bring Israel together again even after it has been scattered

Israel has made for God's glory

This is how love is measured

By what God will do to show his love to

his people

But part two: 8-13 Speaks about what God can offer any other party. And has offered in the past!

Like in a court of law, he brings witnesses

From outside and inside Israel

To demonstrate that he is the almighty God

And that he is the **only** God

And that there is no one else who can save

Part three (14-21) tells about what God will still do and what he has done in the past

God will free them from Babylon (as they are currently in exile)

As God has freed them from Egypt in the past

And has the power to this

Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old - I am about to do a new thing!

^ 18-19a

He will give his chosen people, the people he has made, everything they need

So that they will declare his praise!

God would love to see Israel's  
love to him returned!

By praising him!

He gives them everything

So at least they can praise him?

So Part 4 (v22-24) speaks about  
that Israel has not loved God, has  
not returned his love

Yet, you did not call upon me

But you have been weary of me

^ v22

Israel has not honoured God

Not even the sacrificial system they  
could bother to keep in place

even if God did not required that

^ v23

Like the other so called gods

Instead they have sinned, and made  
God tired by all the things they have  
done wrong

Then Part 5 (v25-28)

God calls them to a trial

Why did you not love me!

I have always forgiven you

Yes, I punished your ancerstors

And then it carries on in Chapter 44

He continues to reassure Israel

That he will redeem them

As he is the Almighty God

There is no one like him

## Love letter

The whole section reads like a love letter of a lover, who has done everything for his beloved

But who has spurned her lover

She took all the benefits

But not wanting to love the lover back

## Cost

This is a love that is costly

Costly for God

Look how much he has invested in his people

And they have not returned his love

## Luke 2:21-40

We are already after Christmas

Jesus is named, circumcised and presented in the temple

All the required statutes of the law are fulfilled

Luke is very clear to stress that

Jesus comes from a proper Jewish family, adhering to the law

But wherever Jesus goes, the Spirit goes with him

And the Spirit stirs people to make proclamations about Jesus

## Zechariah speaks about the consolation of Israel

Comfort o Comfort my people

^ Isa 40:1-2

The HS has told Zecharia that he would see the messiah, the comforter

## Anna speaks about Jesus will bring the redemption of Israel

We do not hear her words

But Luke summarises it in that way

## Zechariah also speaks about that Jesus will also be a light of revelation to the Gentiles

Bringing glory to the people of Israel

But also extending God's love to outside of Israel

## But Zechariah also indicates that there will be cost

### In the form of judgement

Jesus will raise up people, but also bring people down

He will be opposed

And the true nature and thoughts of people will be revealed

And this will cause pain. Pain to Mary herself. But also pain to others



himself. But also pain to others.

As well as pain to God

## The cost of love

So the intersection of the two passages is about the cost of love

How much it has cost God to love his people, even if his people do not return his love

In Isaiah 40 we see what it cost God to love the people of Israel

In Luke we see that the life of Jesus as consoler and redeemer of Israel is also costly

For God as his Son will be rejected again

Not only by Israel, but by all the people

We see the hints of the cost of Jesus' life, death and resurrection hinted at

## When we speak about love, do we speak about the cost of love?

Because when Love is a decision, it also has a cost

Like it is hard for God, who loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may have

eternal live

But there is then also a cost to  
love God

Not only in our times of worship

But in our daily lives

To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly or prudently  
with justice your God

^ Micah 6:8

We cannot accept the cost of  
Love that God, that Jesus has  
spend for us

By not returning it to him

Yes, salvation is free

Except to love God back, with all  
our heart, soul and mind

<sup>34</sup> “Then the King will say to those on  
his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed  
by my Father; take your inheritance,  
the kingdom prepared for you since the  
creation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I was  
hungry and you gave me something to  
eat, I was thirsty and you gave me  
something to drink, I was a stranger  
and you invited me in, <sup>36</sup> I needed  
clothes and you clothed me, I was sick  
and you looked after me, I was in

prison and you came to visit me.'

^ Matthew 25:34-36

That is perhaps the cost of love

Amen