03.16.2014

NewCity
Celebrating Christ.
Serving Cincinnati.

Week 5 | The Maker is Your Husband
Isaiah 54:1-10

Announcements (5 Minutes)

Catch everybody up to date on what's going on with New City. You can use your bulletin as a tool to do so.

- The Mazatlan Team is leaving on March 31 (some cGroups are involved in donations for the children's homes; if your group is, make sure and talk about that).
- The next New Member Sunday is April 6. If you have been through the Intro to New City class and are interested in becoming a member, contact Amy (amy.samad@newcitycincy.org).
- If you haven't had a chance yet, make sure and do the Community Group Self-Assessment and summarize your results for us here.

ENGAGE (10 MINUTES)

Starter Questions: Use either of both of the following to get the discussion started:

- You were just given a yacht. What would you name it?
- If a movie was being made of your life, which actor/actress would you choose to play you?

REFLECTION AND STUDY (30-35 MINUTES)

From now until Easter we're going to be looking at the latter chapters of Isaiah, particularly focusing in on the Suffering Servant. This week we transition from the Servant himself to the salvation he brings.

1.) Read Isaiah 54:1-10. What stands out to you as significant, challenging or confusing?

2.) How would you characterize the mood of this passage? Why?

3.) The immediate context of verses 1-3 is the return of Israel from exile and the renewal of the promises made originally to Abraham. But the New Testament applies this passage to

the church (Galatians 4, for example). In what way do we get to be part of the fruitfulness of the kingdom?

4.) William Carey (the founder of modern missions) famously preached on Isaiah 54:1-3. He had two main points: a.) Expect great things from God, and b.) Attempt great things for God. How is God calling you to "expand your tent" in mission?

5.) Discuss the image "your Maker is your husband" (v.5). What does this tell us about our relationship with God?

6.) If you really believed his anger was for a moment, but his love is everlasting (v.7-8), how would that change your relationship to God? others?

7.) Why do you think Isaiah invokes the covenant with Noah in verses 9-10 to talk about the results of the Servant's work on our behalf?

8.) Of the 3 metaphors for salvation used in this passage, which is most meaningful to you? Why?

9.) **Optional**: Make copies of the attached Handout. Read this through together. Discuss anything that stands out, or personal applications that can be made.

Prayer (15 minutes)

Break up into smaller groups of men and women. For those who are comfortable, share your applications and pray for one another.

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Isaiah 54:1-10 Handout

This week we shift from a discussion of the Servant to the salvation he brings. Isaiah gives us 3 descriptions of God's salvation that Jesus brings into the world.

1.) Fruitfulness (54:1-3). The image is of a barren woman who miraculously (and unexpectedly) has many children. Isaiah is talking about Israel's restoration after the exile and also the reaffirmation of God's promise to Abraham that they would bless the nations. In Galatians 4, Paul applies this passage to the church. This reminds us that inwardly, we are spiritually barren and thus need a miraculous (re)birth to become who we are called to be. And outwardly, God is calling us to a fruitful life, impacting others with the gospel and deeds of mercy.

C.S. Lewis' novel *The Great Divorce*, is about a man who goes to heaven and is being shown around by a guide. They see a beautiful woman filled with light, surrounded by men and women who are dancing and loving her. The man asked who she was.

'It's someone ye'll never have heard of. Her name on earth was Sarah Smith, and she lived at Golders Green.'

'She seems to be … well, a person of particular importance?'

'Aye. She is one of the great ones. Ye have heard that fame in this country and fame on earth are two quite different things.' […]

'And who are all these young men and women on each side?'

'They are her sons and daughters.'

'She must have had a very large family, Sir.'

'Every young man or boy that met her became her son … Every girl that met her was her daughter.'

'Isn't that a bit hard on their own parents?'

'No. There are those that steal other people's children. But her motherhood was of a different kind. Those on whom it fell went back to their natural parents loving them more…

And now the abundance of life she has in Christ from the Father flows over into them. […] But already there is joy enough in the little finger of a great saint such as yonder lady to waken all the dead things of the universe into life.'

2.) Reconciliation (54:4-8). The image is that of a husband who wants his wife back. God dares to use the metaphor of marriage to describe the relationship he is calling us into. He is calling us to a relationship of intimacy, exclusivity and comprehensiveness. But like a wayward spouse, Israel gave herself to other gods, committing spiritual adultery. The same is true for us when we put anything in the place of God in our life. But he is calling us back. Have you answered the call (v.6)? If you come to him, you can "put away your shame" (v.4) because the Servant has paid for your sins (53:5-6). "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John 1:9).

Why is it *just* for God to forgive our sins?

3.) Security (54:9-10). The image is the covenant God made with Noah after the flood. The key aspect is that God didn't ask Noah to do anything: it was unconditional. Like with Noah, God hangs his war bow up in the sky because he has chosen to make a "covenant of peace" (v.10) with his people. The gospel is not rooted in our up and down performance, but based instead on his steadfast love. The flood of God's judgment fell on Jesus, so the deluge of his love could wash over us when we come to him.