

Spiritual Orthopaedics!

Isaiah 35¹⁻¹⁰; Magnificat; James 5⁷⁻¹⁰; Matthew 11²⁻¹¹

Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. (Isaiah 35³)

What do we need to know today? God makes a difference!

In the Old Testament the difference God makes was related to the physical land of Israel and in the New Testament that difference if begun at Jesus' birth and will be completed when Jesus comes again.

What difference are you prepared to allow God to make to you?

- ✦ To the exiles, trapped in an alien country, Isaiah brings a message of hope. You can imagine that the journey away from Jerusalem, through the desert, was a miserable time. BUT when the people return things appear brighter - **the wilderness and the dry land shall be glad**. When things are different it is possible to perceive **the glory of the Lord** and **the majesty of our God**.
- ✦ What a difference hope makes to us. Both James and Isaiah agree that one of the differences God makes to us is that we are **strengthened**. What a positive encouragement to weary and disheartened people: **strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those of fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear!**
- ✦ Isaiah tell us that God changes us so that **sighing shall flee** away and James tells us that one of the differences God makes is that we will not **grumble!** If anyone had cause for complaining it was Mary: a twelve-year-old who hadn't gone through puberty was told she was pregnant and she responds - **My soul proclaims the greatness of God, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour**. In all the variety of emotions Mary tells us that in God's timeless action he keeps his promises and turns the world upside down: **casting down the mighty and lifting up the lowly; filling the hungry with good things and sending the rich away empty**.

John asks the question of Jesus, is this the Messiah? The answer comes back - look at the evidence! Lives are changed!

- ✦ All the things that Isaiah prophesied - **the eyes of the blind shall be opened; the ears of the deaf unstopped; the lame shall leap like a deer; the tongue of the speechless shall sing for joy** - is fulfilled in Jesus: **the blind receive their sight; the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed; the deaf here; the dead are raised; AND the poor have good news brought to them**.

No-one meets Jesus and stays the same!

- ✦ Has God changed you so that you can see signs of hope and the wilderness of our communities come alive?
- ✦ Has God changed you so that your joints are mended so that you can praise God?
- ✦ Has God changed you so that you stop sighing and grumbling?
- ✦ Has God changed you so that you not only know about but live the Good News?
- ✦ Has God changed you so that you, like Mary, are prepared to say yes to him to do your part in turning the world upside-down?

How far will you allow God to change you?