

## Isaiah 42:1-9 The Lord's Chosen Servant

Starting in cp. 41 going through cp.55:13 we see a new theme In Isaiah we haven't really seen yet. Isaiah begins to speak quite a bit in these chapters about a servant. In these chapters we see the word "servant" 18 times. And over and over again, God calls Israel, "my servant" (cf. 41:8, 9; 44:1, etc.). As we read through these verses we learn a lot about what it means for Israel to be the servant of God. Starting in 41:8 we see that God has sovereignly chosen Israel above all the other nations and called them out of their sin and made them the friend of God. He redeems them (many verses). He helps them in their need. In their weakness He is strong. He gives them victory, even when there appears to be no hope. He works miraculously in their midst to keep them and carry them through adverse circumstances. He gives them the task of proclaiming his good works among the nations. Israel is his servant in every way, as the ones who receives blessings and the ones who give blessings to the world. Psalm 67:1-2 sum up this truth: **"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!"** And when we come to the NT we see the same truth for Christians. In 2 Pet. 1:1 Peter says: **"Simeon Peter, a Servant and apostle of Jesus Christ . . ."**

Now, this truth is clear in Isaiah and the rest of the Bible. But, there is a major problem. In Isaiah Israel (as a whole) does not hear and does not see the truth. But instead they turn to idols and worship them instead of Almighty God. Isaiah 42:17-19: **"They are turned back and utterly put to shame, who trust in carved idols, who say to metal images, 'You are our gods.' Hear, you deaf, and look, you blind, that you may see! Who is blind but my servant, or deaf as my messenger whom I send? Who is blind as my dedicated one, or blind as the servant of the Lord?"** And this is our experience as well! Oh how we have failed this week in our faithfulness as the servants of God! This is the context of cps. 40-55.

With this in mind, Isaiah introduces another servant, One who, in every way fulfills the task designed for Israel, God's chosen servant (42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:1). The first passage is found in 42:1-9. And it is none other than the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, the true servant who does what Israel fails to do. Today, as we take the Lord's Supper, I want us to consider 3 unique truths about this true servant.

1. There is a unique relationship with God the Father. In v. 1 we have the word, "Behold." And as we've seen, this word is one of astonishment, meaning "look and see and be amazed" at what I am doing. And the context of our passage is the idolatry of God's "servant" Israel (see 41:21-29). But, it seems very clear to me that Isaiah in vv.1-4 speaks of a different, unique servant, One who is not idolatrous, but instead is obedient, fulfilling the task God has given him. *"Why, you might ask?"* Notice some differences. Here we see the language shift to the use of "he" instead of the normal "you" in other places (cf. 41:8). At the end of v. 1 we see that he also "delights" in this servant. This word "delight" or "delights" is used 16 times in Isaiah, but in this case, a different Hebrew word is used. It is translated in English to "be pleased with" or to "accept favorably."

I think of a teacher with some very good students in his/her class. And as they study and try their best the teacher says, *"I am pleased with you. I accept you,"* as any good teacher would do. But

then the teacher goes home and he looks at his own little boy who also does well in school and tries his best. But, there is something special about this relationship because the little boy is also his son. In the same kind of way, God the Father has a special relationship with the Son. And though a great mystery, it is true! The eternal Father has always loved the eternal Son. And their relationship is different than God's relationship with creation, and even with his people. With his people we have a creator/creaturely relationship, not an eternal relationship that has always been.

Do you remember the words at Jesus' baptism? **"And behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased"** (Matt. 3:17). And when Jesus was transfigured on the mountain with Peter, James, and John, we read in Matt. 17:5: **"behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."** John 3:35: **"The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand."** John 5:20: **"For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing."**

So, how does this help us today as we remember this truth about our Lord. Well, everything He does for us begins with his unique relationship with the Father. All authority has been given to Him. **"If you've seen me you've seen the Father."** Everything Jesus does flows from his unique place in the Trinity, the most beautiful relationship ever imagined. And, it is Jesus' desire that we also be included in this relationship. John 17:22, Jesus says to the Father, **"The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one."** And it is the death of Christ that ushers in this relationship. **"This is my body broken for you."**

2. There is a unique empowerment from God. Look at v. 1. **"I have put my Spirit upon him . . ."** It is interesting that the word "Spirit" in the ESV is capitalized (not so in some other versions.) In the Hebrew it is not capitalized; it is the simple word for "breath," "wind," or "spirit." So how do we know Isaiah is talking about the Messiah and not another prophet like Isaiah or one of Israel's kings or "Israel" in general? Because from time to time we read that the "Spirit" of God is in their midst (Is. 63:11), and the Spirit of God often works in mighty ways among them. Well, there are lots of clues in Isaiah that point to a unique servant. In Is. 11:1 we read: **"There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. 2 And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him . . ."** And then in v. 3 we read: **"He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge . . ."** In other words, his ability to judge goes beyond what a mere man can see or hear; there is something altogether powerfully righteous in this person.

When we turn to the NT Matthew quotes these exact verses from Isaiah 42 to show that He is the true servant of which Isaiah spoke (Matt. 12:18-21). Also, do you remember at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry as he entered a synagogue and the leaders asked him to read from the Hebrew Bible. Do you remember what He read? He quotes from Isaiah 61:1 saying: **"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed . . ."** Let me give one more instance of the empowerment of the Messiah. John the Apostle says in 3:31: **"He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all."** And then just a couple verses later he says, **"For he whom**

**God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand” (vv. 34-35).**

So what is our truth? Jesus is not like Isaiah or one of the prophets or like King David regarding his power. Though He is a man like us in his flesh, He is unique in that the very power of God doesn't just come and go with Him. He is God! **“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”** And what a marvelous mystery! 100% God, 100% man, two natures, united in one person! And this truth is absolutely necessary for his death to accomplish our salvation. ***“This is my body broken for you.”***

3. **There is a unique task.** This task is to rule the whole world in righteousness. Look at v. 1: **“he will bring forth justice to the nations.”** V. 3: **“he will faithfully bring forth justice.”** And. V. 4: **“He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth.”** This is a major theme of Isaiah as we see the words “righteousness” and “justice” more than 75 times. As we approach Christmas, we celebrate Jesus the Messiah and often quote Is. 9 where we read: **“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.”**

This is the reason Jesus came: to establish righteousness on the earth. And He is the ONLY One who can accomplish this. Do you remember God's command to Adam? Gen. 1:28: God says, **“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”** Adam's task, our task is the same. We are created in the image of God to spread his righteousness, his glory, his name, his beauty, throughout the earth. But Adam failed in righteousness. He sinned against his creator. And instead of righteousness, sin reigned. And it still reigns in us. For we have sinned and fall short of God's glory. Adam failed his task just as Israel in Isaiah's day failed their task, just as we do the same.

Brothers and sisters, look at the world. Righteousness does not rule this earth from what we can see. Nations fight with one another. There are wars and natural disasters. There is constant disagreement between the nations and even among our nation as political parties do whatever it takes to gain the upper hand. There is hate and death. It is hard for me to imagine the atrocities that take place with kidnappings and plots to kill people. The world is confused about gender and race. Poverty and injustice are in every corner of the earth. And even in our own little corner of China Grove we may think it isn't so bad. But, when we examine our own hearts, we have fights, we want our way, we think thoughts we shouldn't think, marriages struggle, children rebel. Life is not full of justice and righteousness. Brothers and sisters, the answer to the unrighteousness of this world is found in the true servant of the Lord. Where ADAM failed his task, where ISRAEL failed their task, where WE fail our task, to be righteous and to spread the glory of God across this earth, Christ did not!

How so? This is the beauty of the gospel. In the incarnation, God took on flesh (the reason we celebrate Christmas!). He lived a perfect life in his actions and his motive. He fulfilled EVERY part of God's command to Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, to Moses, to David, to every sinner who has failed this task. And that's not all. God was clear in his instruction to Adam, "*The day you eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you will die*" (2:17). His command to Adam was clear. "*Obey me and you will live.*" "*And as you obey me, have children, spread my glory over all the earth. Let my righteousness rule through you and your life and your children's lives.*" But he failed! Physical death, spiritual death, and separation from God came as the RIGHTEOUS judgment of God. And it is the righteous judgment of God upon ALL of Adam's kin. Therefore, in order for righteousness to rule again, there must be a death that will really and truly appease the wrath of God and set things right again. Jesus says, "*This is my body broken for you.*"

And that's not all! Death could not hold the Lord of life! In righteousness He rose again! And now He sits at the right hand of God, ruling in righteousness from heaven. And we wait for his return where He will judge all unrighteousness. All of this is the gospel of Christ! And today, there is a people who are uniquely united to the true servant of the Lord, Jesus Christ. And this is by faith. Those who are united to Him, those who have believed in Him, are now said to be "*seated in the heavenly places with him*" (Eph. 2:6). And this is why we are also called "servants" of the living God. And this includes both Jew and Gentile. In Christ, the glory of God is spreading over the earth, by His Spirit, as those who are united to him, make disciples.

There is so much more in this passage that I have skipped. (But, we will cover these truths coming up in 3 more servant passages.) But in conclusion, let me make a few comments.

Notice the Triune God in our truths today. We've seen, Jesus' unique relationship. In essence He is God. And we have seen that He is given the Spirit without measure to accomplish his task. This is none other than the work of the Holy Spirit. And He is the Son of God. In every way God is glorified in his person and work.

We see the most beautiful character of Christ. In v. 2 "**He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street . . .**" In v. 3 "**He will faithfully bring forth justice in the earth.**" V. 4 "**He will not grow faint or be discouraged . . .**" Here we see humility, patience, faithfulness, contentment, and a whole host of qualities of character. And because He has them, he gives them to us by his Spirit. We are different from the world. We are like Christ. By his power we live.

We see a beautiful picture of how Christ deals with us. "**A bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.**" We are not faithful! He is! And in our weakness, He keeps us! "This is my body broken for you.