



“The Servant of the Lord”

Isaiah 42:1-9

[based on the sermon preached on 8.1.23 – available on the [church app](#) or at <https://lwac.org.au/sermons>]

KEY IDEAS

1. The Lord will send his servant to minister justice to all in the power of the Spirit.
2. The servant will be compassionate, merciful and gracious to those who are suffering.
3. The servant will release those held in bondage by breaking the power that binds them.
4. God will send his servant as a light even for the Gentiles.

CONNECT

- Serving always involves the attitude of humility. Because of our sin nature and selfish tendencies, this humbling does not always come easy. Think through your own life, past or present. What is one area or situation in which you are being asked or have been asked to be a servant? Is this easy or difficult? Have you begun serving in this way or are you resisting? If serving, what was it which allowed you to choose to serve? If resisting, what is it which keeps you from serving in this way?

STUDY

Read Isaiah 42:1-4

- In the first half of Isaiah 42:1 God is describing his servant or chosen one. With this in mind, read Matthew 3:17, Mark 1:11, and Luke 3:22. Is the wording of these verses similar to Isaiah 42:1? If so, how? Describe the context or setting of these verses. Who is speaking in these verses? What do you think this indicates about Jesus’ fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy concerning God’s servant in Isaiah 42:1?
- Read the second half of Isaiah 42:1. Then read Matthew 3:16, Mark 1:10 and the first line of Luke 3:22. What emphasis do these gospel verses have in common with the second half of Isaiah 42:1? Does this further strengthen the conclusion that Jesus is the Servant of the Lord of whom Isaiah spoke?

- Three times in verses 1-4 God (through Isaiah) describes his servant as bringing forth “justice.” We often define this term today in a strictly judicial or courtroom sense, but in this context it means more than that. Justice is righteousness applied, and Christ, being our sinless sacrifice, is the only one who is truly righteous, thus the only one truly able to dispense justice. Further, the greatest injustice is our sinfulness before God, thus the greatest justice is removing that sin and giving us righteousness in its place, or justice before God. And, because we now have and live in the righteousness of Christ, we can act righteously or justly towards others.
- Identify some good, biblical, God honoring ways in which the historic church and Christians have acted justly towards others or towards the nations. Have there also been instances where Christians have not acted justly? What are some of those instances? How has the church acting unjustly hurt or hindered the gospel?
- We hear a lot today about “social justice,” but is social justice the same as the justice which the servant of the Lord will bring? In what ways might they be similar? In what ways might they be different?
- Verses 2 and 3 describe the tenderness and gentleness of the ministry of the servant of the Lord. From your existing knowledge of the gospels and the activities of Jesus’ ministry, or by skimming the gospels briefly, create a list of Jesus’ ministry actions which are examples of this gentleness and kindness.
- Read Matthew 12:18-21. Note that this is not Jesus speaking but Matthew’s commentary about who Jesus is. Note also the place where Matthew includes this commentary in his gospel, right after Jesus heals a man with a shriveled hand in 12:8-13. How does Isaiah’s/God’s original description of the servant of the Lord resonate with what Jesus has just done in healing the man with the shriveled hand?
- The very end of 42:4 states that “the islands” will put their hope in the teachings of the servant of the Lord. What do you think God/Isaiah means by “the islands?” Does it literally (and only) refer to islands, or does it imply something else, something greater?
- Given what you know of Jesus’ teaching and ministry, what is it in which the islands will put their hope? Describe this teaching/law which gives hope in your own words.

Read Isaiah 42:5-7

- In 42:5, God is reminding us who he is, giving us his resume, so to speak. He lists several of his “qualifications:” he created the heavens, stretching them out, he created the earth and every living thing on it, and he created and gives life to human beings who walk upon the

earth. Why do you suppose God included this reminder of his qualifications, of who he is, at this point in this passage about his servant?

- Then, in 42:6 God directly addresses his servant, rather than talking about him in the third person as he did in 42:1-4. Four themes are present in this short address to the servant. One, the servant has been called in righteousness (which we have already seen is closely associated with justice). Two, God will take the hand of and keep the servant, indicating that the servant will operate directly in God's power. Three, the servant will literally **be** a covenant for the people. This is an amazing statement as the Israelites were well aware of the idea of covenant, going back to Abraham and Moses. But in both of those the covenant was more a thing, an agreement. Now, God says the covenant will be (or be embodied in) a person, his servant. Four, and perhaps most amazingly, the servant - his righteousness, power and as the covenant - will be for the Gentiles. For Jews who as descendants of Jacob considered themselves alone to be the people of God, this was an astounding statement, even a confrontation to their normal understanding. What does this inclusion of the servant as for the Gentiles indicate about God's desire for all mankind? Is God the God of the Jews only or of all mankind?
- The end of v. 6 describes the servant as a "light" for the Gentiles. What evidence in the gospels reveals Jesus as a light not just for the Jews but also for the Gentiles? Consider Matt 8:5-13 (the Roman Centurion) and Matt 15:21-28 (a Canaanite woman). What events in Acts show the apostles struggling with this but ultimately embracing it? Consider Acts 10:1-11:18.
- In 42:7, God describes the mission of his servant as including three actions: opening eyes of the blind, freeing captive prisoners and releasing those in dungeons. The first of these, opening blind eyes, surely has a literal, physical application (see John 9), but can it also have a spiritual meaning? In John 9:41 Jesus observes the Pharisees claim to be able to see perfectly (they are spiritually pure) but because of their self-righteousness they are actually spiritually blind and still guilty, not pure at all.
- In what ways are people spiritually blind today? What does Jesus opening the eyes of the spiritually blind look like today?
- Do the other references to freedom in v. 7 (from prisons and dungeons) refer to literal imprisonment or spiritual imprisonment? How are people who are not physically incarcerated yet imprisoned? What things or situations can imprison us today? How does Jesus free us and release us from them?

Read Isaiah 42:8-9

- In 42:8, God declares that he is the Lord. "Lord" here is Yahweh or Jehovah, indicating the all powerful but personal God of Abraham, Jacob and Moses. He emphatically states that is not just his name, but who he is. The Lord God will not yield his glory to another, reminding us he is a jealous God. Read Exodus 20:4-5. Do you see any similar themes here to 42:8?

- Why do you suppose God's rejection of idols is so strong? Why does God not want to share his glory with anyone or anything else?
- We tend to think of idols as only little statues of foreign gods, but truthfully we can make an idol out of any item or any activity or any person or any skill or ability. What things, activities, skills or people in your life do you have to keep watch over so they do not become idols?
- Why do you think God tells us to not look back but look forward to the new thing he is doing in 42:9? What is this new thing? Is it a reference to Jesus? Could it also remind us not to look back in shame or obsess over our sin once it has been forgiven by Christ through his redemptive work on the cross?

APPLY

- In what ways might you have been attempting to take away some of God's glory for yourself recently? Have you been careful to give God the glory for all that he has done for you? What are some ways, even habits, such as saying grace before meals, which you get into which will help you give the glory and praise to God rather than trying to keep some of it for yourself?
- What is one thing from your past which you need to let go of, turning it over to Christ, as the servant of the Lord? What might allowing God to do a new thing in or through or for you look like in this situation?
- Which other aspect of this study has struck you the most and why? What are you going to do as a result ?
- Identify one or more truths from this study which speak to and can be applied in your life.
 - 1.
 - 2.

PRAY FOR OUR CHURCH AND FOR ONE ANOTHER

- According to need.