

INI - SDG

2nd Sunday a. Epiphany
January 16, 2011
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Hecla, SD

Text: Isaiah 49:1-6 *Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name. He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away. And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified." But I said, "I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the LORD, and my recompense with my God." And now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him – for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD and my God has become my strength – he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."*
(ESV)

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ISAIAH

Theme: **HOW GOD IS GLORIFIED:**

- **By the redemptive work of His Servant**
- **When the light of His Gospel shines throughout the world**

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ Jesus, who have been called out of the darkness and into His marvelous light, that you may proclaim His praises, grace and peace be multiplied unto you.

"Remember who's son you are." These are the parting words a father gave to his son as he left home for his first year of college. This father wanted his 18 year-old son to remember that he was his son and whatever he did would reflect on his family and his up-bringing. If this son was getting into trouble all the time in college, that would bring shame to the family name. If his son was a good student and loyal friend, that would bring glory to the family name.

We often forget whose sons and daughters we are, don't we. Paul reminds us when he writes to the Galatians, "***You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.***" (Gal 3:14) When God brought us to faith in His Son Jesus, He made us members of His family. This was an amazing act of grace by the Triune God. He didn't have to do this. He didn't have to send His Son and sacrifice Him to pay for our sins. He didn't have to choose us from eternity to be His children. He didn't have to send the Holy Spirit into our hearts to create faith. But He chose us by grace, He adopted us by grace, and brought you into His family. This was God's act of grace in making us His own dear children.

And so we can take the phrase of that father to his collegiate son and apply it to ourselves, "Remember whose sons you are." Just as that 18 year-old would not want to bring shame on the family name, nor do we as children of the heavenly Father bring shame on our Family name. We want to bring glory to the name of the one who loved us so much that He would give His own Son as a sacrifice for our sins.

As we look for ways in which to glorify God we turn to our text for today. And in our text we have a rather unique conversation taking place. It is not every day that we can read of a conversation between God the Father and God the Son. In our text God the Son, Jesus, has something He wants the whole world to talk about. We also hear of what God the Father has to say about the work His Son is going to do. In our text we hear how God is glorified. He is glorified by the redemptive work of His Servant and He is glorified when the light of the Gospel is spread throughout the world. May the Holy Spirit lead us that we may always glorify His holy name!

BY THE REDEMPTIVE WORK OF HIS SERVANT

There are many servants of the LORD mentioned throughout Scripture. Moses and David were servants of the LORD. It was their goal in life to serve the LORD. Having been bought back from the slavery of sin by the blood of Christ, we have been made servants of the LORD. But much like there are many presidents in our country but we only refer to one as THE President, so too there are many servants of the LORD in Scripture but there is only one Servant (capital "S") of the LORD.

Beginning in Isaiah 42, the prophet writes of the chosen Servant of the LORD. The Servant of the LORD would open the eyes of the blind and bring prisoners out of captivity. Isaiah also writes in chapter 42 that the LORD would put His Spirit upon His Servant. Who is this Servant of the LORD? It is none other than Jesus Christ. Remember how at His baptism the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove and remained on Him? And who else but Jesus opened the eyes of the blind both physically and spiritually? And who else but Jesus freed the spiritual captives from their slavery to sin? Jesus is the Servant of the LORD of whom Isaiah was prophesying in these chapters.

Isaiah 49 goes on to tell us more about the Servant of the LORD. He says in verse one, ***"The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name."*** This ought to remind us of the Virgin Birth. Even from the moment of conception, the LORD made known the name of His Servant, Jesus. The name that would describe both Him and His work, as Jehovah saves.

The work of the Servant was that of the great Prophet promised through Moses. Isaiah writes of the Servant of the LORD, ***"He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away."*** The words of Jesus pierce right to the heart like a sharp sword. Like a polished arrow, His words hit a bullseye every time He takes aim at the heart of man. His words of law convict the sinner and His Word of Gospel comfort the troubled heart. This is why Jesus would often command the people He healed not to tell anyone. He wanted people who followed Him because of His teaching, not because of the miracles He worked.

The principle work which the Servant of the LORD would do, as Isaiah writes in verse 5, would be ***"to bring Jacob to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him."*** Yes, Jesus was sent principally to the Children of Israel. They were the covenant people of God. They were the ones who had the Promise. When a Gentile Canaanite woman came to Jesus asking Him to help with her demon possessed daughter, Jesus replied, ***"I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*** (Mt 15:24) Herein God would be glorified, when He sent His Servant Jesus to seek and to save that which was lost.

But this work of saving the lost would not be limited to just the Children of Israel. John

the Baptist was right when he proclaimed that Jesus was the Lamb of God, sent to take away the sin of the WORLD. Jesus did not just come to redeem the Jews, He came also to redeem the Gentiles. The LORD God says of His Servant in verse 6, ***“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”*** In the eyes of the LORD it was not enough to simply bring back the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The Servant of the LORD came to save all sinners, Jew and Gentile alike. This is how God would be glorified, by the redemptive work of His Son in paying for the sins of the whole world.

And yet it is remarkable to hear the thoughts of the Servant of the LORD about His work. We read in verse 4, ***“I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity.”*** The Servant of the LORD feels that all His work is for naught. He feels that the descendants of Jacob are not coming back to the LORD and Israel is not being gathered to the LORD. Indeed as we look at the ministry of Jesus we see just that. He was despised and rejected by men. He came to His own and His own did not receive Him. One Sunday, Jerusalem was hailing Him as their King, by Friday they called for Him to be crucified.

We see this anguish of the Servant of the LORD especially in the Garden of Gethsemane. The night before His death He revealed His anguish to His disciples, ***“My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death.”*** (Mt 26:38) And when He prayed to His Father about what lay before Him, the Servant of the LORD prayed, ***“O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.”*** (v 39) We should not think for a moment that because Jesus was true God that His suffering and death was easy. It was hard because He was true Man and it was hard because He was hated. So excruciating was His agony that Luke writes that His sweat was like great drops of blood falling to the ground. (Lk 22:44)

But how did Jesus end those prayers in Gethsemane? ***“Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”*** More important to the Servant of the LORD than His own desires and fears, was doing the will of His Father. We read the same thing in our text in verse 4, ***“Yet surely my right is with the LORD, and my recompense with my God.”*** While He was so troubled about His work, His suffering, and His rejection, He entrusted everything to the hands of His God. While He would receive injustice from man, He knew that the LORD would treat Him justly. Peter writes of Jesus, ***“When He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.”*** (1Pt 2:23)

The Servant of the LORD did all this to glorify His Father who sent Him. We read in John 6 Jesus saying, ***“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”*** (Jn 6:38) The goal of the Servant of the LORD to glorify Him who sent Him. There was no greater way for the Servant of the LORD to glorify the Father than to willingly lay down His life as a sacrifice for the sin of the world. That is how the Servant of the LORD glorified God.

As servants of the LORD we too want to bring glory to our Father’s name. But no where does the LORD ask of us what He asked of His Servant Jesus. No where does He call on us to lay down our life for the sins of the world. Even if we were to make such a sacrifice, it would not be able to save one soul. Such a sacrifice would not be free spot or blemish, but stained by sin. Only the sinless Son of God was called upon to lay down His life for the sins of the world. And He did it. He paid for every last one of our sins. There is no more sacrifice to be made.

However, we can glorify God by spreading the light of His gospel throughout the world. God wants His salvation to reach the ends of the earth. Jesus has commissioned us to preach the Gospel to all creatures. Reaching the ends of the earth begins in our own backyards. It begins with family members who either don't know about the love of Christ or who do not know the full glory of the Gospel. We can shine the light of the Gospel into their hearts as we share the truth about God's salvation in Christ Jesus. We may not be able to go to Africa or India or Nepal to shine the light of the Gospel, but we can support those who are. We can support them first and foremost with our prayers and also with our offerings.

There will be times when we will feel disheartened, much as the Servant of the LORD did about His work. ***"I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity."*** How many times have we advertised a service or a luncheon and seen no fruit for our labors? How many times have we invited someone to church only to be turned down? It seems that we have labored in vain.

But remember how God is glorified. He is glorified when His salvation is being made known. Certainly we would love to see the fruits of our labor, but that is not always the case. Nor is the fruit always immediately evident. You may be one link in a long chain that God is using in the life of someone. You may also be the voice God is using to leave an unbeliever without excuse. Nowhere does God call upon us to convert all nations, that is the work of the Holy Spirit. Our calling is to proclaim the good news about salvation through His Servant, Jesus Christ. May God help us to always glorify Him in this way.

"Remember whose son you are." Certainly Jesus always remembered whose Son He was. He sought to glorify His Father in everything He did. Jesus glorified His name by laying down His life to save us. Through faith in Jesus we have been made sons of God. May the Holy Spirit cause us always to remember that. May He aid us and give us the right words that we may gladly and willingly glorify our Father by telling others of what great things He has done for us in Christ Jesus.

*I hear the Savior calling! He leads a soul to me,
A soul in bitter anguish, One needing to be free.
The gift I have to offer Is Christ, my Lord's decree
That all have been forgiven – My Savior calls for me! Amen. (WS #770:2)*