

Despised for our Salvation

Isaiah 49

Welcome.

54th sermon in Isaiah, a preacher who was firmly convinced of “God’s Unfolding Plan” in history.

*We are on the **homestretch** of Isaiah, as we explore our final theme: **“Life and Death of Messiah.”**

***There were 4 chapters that highlighted the Life of Messiah (Isaiah 40-43)**

***And there are 4 chapters that highlight aspects of the Death (or rejection) of Messiah:**

- *Isaiah 49* *Despised for our Salvation*
- *Isaiah 50* *Disgraced for our Benefit*
- *Isaiah 52* *Buried for our Redemption*
- *Isaiah 53* *Wounded for our Healing*

*Isaiah describes the coming Messiah as the “Servant” who would be despised, disgraced, and wounded for our sins...and yet through his defeat the people of God would somehow be rescued.

*Those in Isaiah’s day could not possibly have comprehended how the Lord would do this.

*For 700 years these words would lie dormant (like seeds in the ground during winter).

*But eventually God fulfilled these words through the death of Christ on the cross.

*As we turn to Isaiah 49, we open a chapter that reveals the work of Jesus.

*The key to opening the mystery of Is. 49 is to understand the identity of who is speaking.

***This week I saw a locksmith van called “Captain Lock Pick” able to unlock any door.**

*Before we open the door of Is. 49, let me **show you the key** that unlocks the mystery of the Servant

- The Servant is **called** by God and **born** into the world for a mission.
- The Servant comes to **pierce hearts** with His word.
- The Servant is **approved** by God: **“You are my servant in whom I am glorified”**
- The Servant is **rejected** by men.
- The Servant is called the **“light of nations.”**
- The Servant **brings salvation** to the end of the earth.
- The Servant is **“deeply despised, abhorred, servant of rulers.”**
- The Servant **“comforts his people”** and shows **“compassion on his afflicted.”**
- The Servant is **“swallowed up”** in defeat...but eventually the people who defeated him come **“with their faces to the ground they shall bow down...”**

*Who does that sound like? I’m sure even “Captain Lock Pick” could open that door and understand that the Servant speaking is none other than the person of Jesus Christ.

***One commentator said** we are **“...privy to an immeasurably deep conversation between the Father and the Son concerning Jesus’ glorious mission on earth.”** (*Christ-Centered Exposition*)

1. **God sends His “Servant,”** (v.1-7)

• **Approved, but rejected.** (v.1-4)

Listen to me...give attention...The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name. 2 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. 3 And he said to me, “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.” 4 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.”

*The Servant will have the stamp of divine approval from birth. (v.1)

*From the womb God would “name His name” which coincides with His mission.

*The Servant would speak words that **cut like a sword** and **pierce like arrows**. (v.2)

*God will say of Him: **“You are my servant in whom I will be glorified.”** (v.3)

Do you recall **Jesus’ baptism** when God’s voice declares: (Matt. 3, Mark 1, Luke 3)

“You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

And the **Mt. of Transfiguration** when again the voice of God: (Matt. 17, Mark 9, Luke 9)

“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”

*Yet, even with all of this divine approval, the Servant will feel the sting of rejection.

*Remarkably, he feels discouraged: *“I have labored in vain...spent my strength for nothing.*

*Do you recall how much rejection Jesus had in life? He marveled at peoples’ unbelief; the crowds rejected him; the disciples fled; he wept over Jerusalem; he felt forsaken.

*His life was marked by **one rejection after another**; scoffing; ridicule; abandonment.

*What an encouragement for those of us who have **felt hurt by the sting of rejection, or been frustrated that our words have been dismissed, or been discouraged that our labor is in vain.**

*Christ even suffered more, and yet we see His secret to overcoming discouragement:

“Surely my right is with the Lord; my recompense with my God.” (ESV)

“I leave it all in the Lord’s hand; I will trust God for my reward.” (NLT)

*What sweet words by our Lord: For the joy set before him, he endured rejection.

*My friend, this is the secret when we feel our labor is in vain: **Remember who we work for.**

• **Honored, but despised.** (v.5-7)

*“5 And now the Lord says, **he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him...6 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.”***

*Here we find why the Servant was born: **“to bring Jacob back...bring back Israel”**

*That is, to cause the **Jewish people** to repent turn back to the Lord.

“But wait...there’s more!” The Father says that mission is “too light a thing.” (The Message: **Not a big enough job!**). Instead, his ministry would expand **to the end of the earth.**

*Messiah would not just bring Israel back, but He is also the **“light for the nations.”**

*How many love the NT? This verse is quoted in two place as fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

***Luke 2**; Simeon **holds baby Jesus** (fresh from womb) and rejoices the “light of nations”

***Acts 13**; After the Jews reject the gospel, Paul preaches to the Gentiles who receive it and rejoice because Jesus has brought salvation to the ends of the earth.

*And yet...even though He brings salvation, notice how v.7 speaks of Him being **hated**:

*7 Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, **to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers**: “Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”*

*IOW: It gives a picture of people who **deeply despise** the Servant, and yet one day when they recognize who He is, they will fall down on their faces before Him as Lord.

*Powerful! The one who was “despised and kicked around” by the nations will be worshiped.

*Which is exactly why we sing: *“He is Lord. He is Lord. He is risen from the dead and He is Lord. Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord.”*

2. ...who brings salvation, (v.8-21)

• **Seeking the Lost.** (v.8-13)

*8 Thus says the Lord: “In a time of favor **I have answered you**; in a day of salvation **I have helped you**; I will **keep you** and give you as a covenant to the people...”*

*IOW: The Father tells the Son that He will help fulfill the work of salvation. He will not abandon Him, but will help every step of the way to fulfill the work.

*Note: **Paul quotes this in 2 Cor. 6** to encourage those who labor for God as **ministers of reconciliation** actually have the same promise: **God will help us in the work!**

*Back to Is. 49: How will the Father help fulfill the ministry?

*9 **saying to the prisoners**, ‘Come out,’ to **those who are in darkness**, ‘Appear.’ They shall feed along the ways; on all bare heights shall be their pasture; 10 they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, **for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them...**”*

*Notice that God calls people who are the weak and marginalized and in need.

*The Son has compassion on **rejects & rebels**; the **prisoners**; those in **darkness**; those **weary** from hunger; **“He has pity on them and will lead them.”**

*This is likely what Matthew had in mind when Jesus was heartbroken over the people:

*“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because **they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.**” (Matt 9:36)*

***First**, is this the way you see yourself? As weak and in need of being helped by Christ?

***Second**, is this the way you respond to the weak? Do you show pity to the poor?

*Our God shows **special compassion** to the weak that causes **Isaiah to explode with praise**:

*“**Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted.**” (v.13)*

*This is the **only time in Is. 49 we hear the voice of Isaiah**, who cannot contain his praise over the ability of God to show compassion to the weak.

- **Suffering in Defeat. (v.14-18)**

14 *“But Zion said, **“The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me.”***

*What was one of the **7 sayings on the cross**: *“My God... why have you **forsaken me.**”*

*We read words in Is. 49 that Jesus calls to mind upon the cross.

*The final moments of agony. The moment when **all was dark and hope seemed lost.**

*How does the Father respond to the Servant who felt forsaken?

15 *“Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet **I will not forget you.** 16 Behold, **I have engraved you on the palms of my hands**; your walls are continually before me.”*

*Wow! The Father meets the Servant in his despair and gives vivid imagery to describe His love.

*As a mom cannot forget her newborn child, the Father will not abandon the Son.

*“**I will not forget you!**”* Even if moms forget children, I won’t forget you!

*And then, with profound imagery, the Father tells the Son: *“**I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.**”*

*Is it not fascinating that Jesus speaks these words in the moment **his palms are literally being scarred for all eternity...with marks that show**: *“I will never forget you.”*

- **Rising in Victory. (v.19-21)**

*“19 Surely your **waste** and your **desolate** places and your **devastated** land—surely now you will be too narrow for your inhabitants, and **those who swallowed you up will be far away.** 20 The children of your bereavement will yet say in your ears: ‘The place is too narrow for me; make room for me to dwell in.’ 21 Then you will say in your heart: ‘Who has borne me these? I was bereaved and barren, exiled and put away, but who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; from where have these come?’”*

*Confusing. Let me translate. Somehow the sorrow and defeat of the Servant will turn to joy.

Desolation will turn to celebration. Defeat to Victory.

*The Servant will be **“swallowed up” in defeat** and cause his children great sorrow.

*Hope will seem lost. The Servant will appear defeated. The mission will have failed.

*But...Oh **how the tables will turn** (Or, as Michael Scott says: **“how the turns have tabled.”**)

*Something will happen that will turn sorrow to joy. The children who were **devastated by sorrow** will suddenly witness so many people responding with life they will say:

“We need more room! It’s crowded in here!” (NLT)

*And the Servant, who was swallowed up in defeat, will burst forth with glory:

“Where did all these people come from?” (NLT)

*My friend, I may not be a **locksmith, but this sure sounds like the events of Easter Sunday!**

*Just when hope seemed lost and the children of God wept in sorrow, Jesus rose up in power and the church of Christ was born. People began to respond & the church grew.

*For **2,000 years**, the kingdom of God has been populating with people from all over the globe.

***One day, we will look around at millions of people: “It’s crowded in here!”**

*And the **King himself will declare with joy: “Where did all these people come from?”**

3. ...and worldwide triumph! (v.22-26)

*Isaiah 49, which tells about the Servant being **rejected, deeply despised, abhorred, feeling forsaken, and swallowed up**, now ends in worldwide triumph.

*Much could be said, but witness two clear declarations that promise the Servant will triumph:

“23...With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you, and lick the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the Lord; those who wait for me shall not be put to shame.”

26 I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh...Then all flesh shall know that I am the Lord your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”

***This is the Unfolding Plan of God!** Enemies will be defeated; the Servant will triumph; the nations will come and bow before Him as Lord; and the world will know that Christ is Savior.

*End of Chapter. End of Story. Our God wins.

Action Steps:

▪ Turn back to the Lord.

*This is why the Servant came...to bring salvation to the ends of the earth and turn people.

▪ Cultivate a heart (and generosity) for missions.

*He is the “light for the nations.” For all people.

▪ **When discouraged, remember Who you work for.**

*Remember that your reward is with the Lord. When rejected, look to Him. When despised, look to Him. Your 'recompense' is from the – ***compensation for loss suffered.***

*As Jesus "entrusted himself to him who judges justly" so should we.

▪ **Show special compassion to the weak.**

*Jesus showed a special compassion for the down and outers; the social outcast; the weak.

*And so should we.

▪ **Take comfort: the Lord has not forgotten you.**

*His wounded palms declare His love. Father did not forsake His Son. The Son will not forsake you!

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5. ...who brings salvation, (v.8-21)

• **Seeking the lost.** (v.8-13)

• **Suffering in defeat.** (v.14-18)

• **Rising in Victory.** (v.19-21)

6. ...and worldwide triumph! (v.22-26)

• **"Then you will know..."** (v.22-23)

• **"Then all flesh will know..."** (v.24-26)