

## The Hope of Christmas

Isaiah 42:1-9

Intro: Receiving and Giving the Gift of Christmas. Kids learn early on that Christmas is all about gifts. You are either receiving gifts from others or giving gifts to others. Like many of you, the Christmas tree in our living room is collecting gifts on a daily basis. If you have kids, they know exactly who the gifts are for, and specifically which ones are for them. One of the first things our kids do when they wake up is to go and check the tree and if you listen closely you'll even hear them counting how many gifts have their name on it. My guess is that some of your minds have already begun to wonder off on the gifts you still have to buy and if you're not careful, present soon you'll have yourself worked up and worried about all that still has to be done. Just clarify, Christmas is exactly two weeks from today and this past week I came across a shipping deadline list for online stores:

- Amazon: Dec. 15 (free super saver), Dec. 19 (standard), Dec. 21 (2 day), Dec. 22 (1 day)
- Barnes & Noble: Dec. 11 (standard shipping) and Dec. 22 (expedited shipping)
- FinishLine: Dec. 14 (standard and expedited shipping)
- The North Face: Dec. 16 (standard shipping)
- Old Navy: Dec. 13 (Fedex ground) and Dec. 23 (next day)

### Does anyone feel hopeless and despair?

#### **Context of Isaiah:**

- Isaiah is a prophet addressing a people in despair. These people, Israel, have been exiled out of their land and scattered among the nations. But to understand their despair, you must see the big picture.
  - **The Beginning:** God created Adam and Eve to worship, love, and serve him in the land that he had prepared for them, the Garden of Eden. It was a very good land. God gave them one command and demanded perfect obedience. He said, "Trust me." He wanted their loyal obedience.
  - **The Fall:** One tragic day, Adam and Eve rebelled against God deciding that they, not God, would determine right and wrong and they disobeyed him. The consequences were devastating...they were kicked out of the land, exiled, they were separated from God, and soon would physically die.
  - **The Promise:** Even in the midst of such tragedy, God promised Adam and Eve that one of their descendants would someday rescue mankind from sin. So over the next centuries God prepared the way for this person who would be the Savior of the world.
  - **The Question:** who will be this Savior?
    - Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Judah, Moses, Joshua, Judges, Kings: Saul, David, Solomon, the divided kingdom, the exile
  - **The Exile:** the great tragedy of Israel was their repeated faithlessness. Just like Adam and Eve, they did not trust God and therefore they were kicked out of his land, exiled.
  - **Despair:** do you see why they were in despair? Has God been defeated by the Babylonian gods? Had their sin made a mockery of God's promises? Would they ever return to the land and would the temple ever be restored?
  - **The Rescue:** Beginning in Isaiah 40, he begins to bring comfort to the exiles by recounting God's promise to prepare their way and bring them home (see Is. 40:1-5). But, Isaiah wants them to see clearly that mere return from exile will not automatically produce different behavior. They need a savior and in Isaiah 42, this savior is called the Lord's "servant." This is where their story is headed.

**CTS: Jesus is the promised Servant who is the only hope for the world.**

## Read Isaiah 42:1-4

### I. Jesus brings justice to the nations (1-4)

#### a. Who is the servant? (1)

- i. Is. 42:1-9 is the first of four Servant Songs (Is. 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). Isaiah sprinkles references to “the servant of the Lord” throughout chs. 40-55. Often it is a title for the people as a whole (Is. 41:8-10) but at times the servant is a specific person within Israel who is distinct from the whole, with a calling to serve Israel and beyond.
- ii. Characteristics:
  1. God upholds – his success is of God
  2. God’s delight – in contrast with the abomination of idols in 41:24
  3. God’s Spirit – in contrast with the “empty wind” of the idols in 41:29
- iii. Canonical context:
  1. Jesus’ baptism

**Matthew 3:16-17** <sup>16</sup> And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; <sup>17</sup> and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

#### 2. Jesus’ transfiguration

**Luke 9:35** <sup>35</sup> And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!"

#### 3. Characteristic of his life and mission

**Mark 10:45** <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

**Philippians 2:5-8** <sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, <sup>8</sup> he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

#### b. What does the servant do? (1, 3, 4)

- i. What is justice?
    1. Justice signifies a right social order which would include the proper distribution of goods and honor (orphans, widows, poor), including retribution for evil. It also means to reestablish right order in a fallen world which includes a right relationship between the world and its creator.
  - ii. The Servant is the only hope for the nations and for a truly just world.
    1. The Coastlands: this refers to the lands surrounding the Mediterranean Sea and these represent the remotest peoples of the earth.
    2. Matt. 12:21 quotes 42:4 from the Septuagint (Greek trans.) and it says “in his name will the Gentiles hope.”
- c. How does the servant bring forth justice?

**i. He won't come forcefully**

1. He is cast in contrast with ruthless human conquerors
2. In Matthew 12:15-21, Jesus heals many people and then orders them not to make him known. Matthew says this was to fulfill what was spoken by Isaiah in 42:1-4. Matthew quotes Isaiah to show that contrary to the typical 1<sup>st</sup> century rabbinical expectations, the Messiah would not arrive with political agendas, military campaigns, and great fanfare, but with gentleness and meekness.

**ii. He won't crush the weak**

1. Bruised Reed: used by shepherds to fashion a small musical instrument. If it was cracked or torn, it was useless.
2. Smoldering wick: this was useless for giving light
3. The above two represent people deemed useless by the world: "Christ's work was to restore and rekindle such people, not to 'break' them. This speaks of his tender compassion toward the lowliest of the lost. He came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10).
4. The Lord's servant will not crush but defend the weak

**iii. He won't give up**

1. The servant is unweakened by the demands of his mission
2. Already the element of suffering is gently suggested in v. 4 which finds a fuller expression in the 4<sup>th</sup> servant song (Is. 52:13-53:12).

**Isaiah 53:4-12** <sup>4</sup> Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. <sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. <sup>7</sup> He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. <sup>8</sup> By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? <sup>9</sup> And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. <sup>10</sup> Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. <sup>11</sup> Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. <sup>12</sup> Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

**1 Peter 2:21-24** <sup>21</sup> For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. <sup>22</sup> He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. <sup>23</sup> When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. <sup>24</sup> He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

*The holy love of God comes to perfection in rectifying sinners. God is just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:26).*

## II. Jesus brings light to the nations (6-7)

- a. Covenant for the people:
  - i. It signifies a commitment, guaranteeing promises made by one or both parties
  - ii. God's promises: Adam and Eve, Abraham, David
  - iii. This servant will provide the blessings of salvation to God's people
- b. Light for the nations:
  - i. Jesus brings the knowledge of God to them (see John 8:12)
  - ii. Light suggests the widening of the scope of this revelation
    1. Paul quotes Is. 42:6 in Acts 13:47 as mandate for going to the Gentiles
    2. He came as the Messiah of Israel yet was the Savior of the World.
    3. He commanded the gospel to be preached to the ends of the earth
- c. Open eyes, bring out prisoners from darkness:
  - i. Physically
    1. He healed blind people (John 9:1-2)
  - ii. Spiritually
    1. He is using the Babylonian exile as an image for spiritual liberation. This is a picture of God's grace

**2 Corinthians 4:4-6** <sup>4</sup> In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup> For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup> For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

## III. God is the true Lord of history (5, 8-9)

- a. How can I know that God will keep his promises?
- b. God is able to keep the promises made in 1-4 because he is the creator and sustainer.
  - i. In contrast to the idols: God is not one of many, he is not superior among inferior gods; he is not even the best of all; he is the *only* God, and he will have his people know and rejoice in this truth.
- c. God draws attention to the seemingly impossible predictions he is making.
  - i. The point is that the God who has already proved his word true is able to make known new things
  - ii. This also discredits the idolatrous claims of human mastery.
  - iii. The Lord directs all events as he pleases to the final end.
  - iv. Simeon and Anna believed the promises of God.
- d. What's about to happen? King Cyrus is going to set them free and send them back to Israel where they will rebuild the Temple and its walls. Even though they return from exile, they still wait for the promised servant who will forever restore their relationship with God and secure for them an eternal dwelling with him.
  - i. Reference 2 Chronicles 36 and Cyrus' relation to the return from exile and an even greater provision needed