

## The Light of the World

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*Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.*

*<sup>2</sup> He will not cry out or lift up his voice or make it heard in the street; <sup>3</sup> a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. <sup>4</sup> He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth, and the coastlands wait for his teaching. <sup>5</sup> Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it:*

*<sup>6</sup> I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, <sup>7</sup> to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. <sup>8</sup> I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols. <sup>9</sup> See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them” (Isaiah 42:1-9).*

### 1. New Year’s Resolutions

Every year, people make new year’s resolutions. Do you know what 2023’s most popular new year’s resolutions are? They are “exercise more,” “eat healthier,” “lose weight,” “save more money,” and “spend more time with family and friends.”

What about for Christians? What kind of New Year’s resolutions do you think the apostles of Jesus or St. Paul would have made? I imagine their resolutions would be quite different.

In Romans 14, Paul writes, **“Whether we live or die, it must be for God, rather than for ourselves.** (verses 7).

As Christians, our calling is to make resolutions that focus on others, not just ourselves. Scripture reminds us that God delights when we give ourselves to the Lord to be used as servants of God’s purpose on earth.

### 2. The Servant of the Lord

Our passage Isaiah 42 this morning is called “a servant’s song.” This is the first of four servant songs in the Book of Isaiah (49:1-13; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12).

Who is the servant of the Lord? The term “servant” refers to both the nation of Israel and an individual person at different times. One example is Isaiah 49:3, “**You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor.**”

However, Isaiah 42:1-3 is quoted in Matthew 12:18-21. In the New Testament, these four Servant songs are used to refer to the messianic prophecies. The servant is Jesus.

In the passage today, the Prophet Isaiah introduces the servant as the one who has received the divine spirit. When Jesus was baptized, Jesus saw God’s Spirit descending like a dove and alighting on him (Matthew 3:16).

What then is the mission of the servant? The passage tells us that “**He will bring forth justice to the nations.**” What does the term “justice” mean in the passage? The meaning of justice in the Bible is to follow God’s way to make right that which is wrong.

Isaiah 1:17 says, “**Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, and please the widow’s cause.**” The servant’s mission is to correct oppression and bring forth God’s justice to the fatherless and the widows who are mistreated. As followers of Jesus, God calls us to take care of those who need help.

This justice is not only for Israel but also for the nations. The servant’s mission is universal. How will the servant of the Lord bring justice to the nations? Our passage tells us that this will not be done by force, but in a manner that “**cannot even extinguish dim wicks or bend bruised reeds** (v. 3)”. The Four Gospels witness to us that this is what Jesus did throughout his ministry.

### **3. A Light to the Nations**

In verses 5 through 7, the Lord promises to assist the Servant to fulfill his mission. In verse 6, God reminds his servant that he has been called. “**I have called you in righteousness; I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations.**”

God tells his servant that the will of God is to be a light to the Gentiles. This means “**to open eyes to the blind, to free captives from prison, and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness**” (verse 7).” God’s will for his servant is to take care of the physical and spiritual healing of those needing care. His mission is for everyone.

In John 12:32, Jesus says to some Greeks, “**When I lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.**” At the cross Jesus would draw

all people. Isaiah 49:6 also says, ***“I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”*** God’s salvation is intended for the whole world.

The salvation of the world through the servant of the Lord was planned by God even at the time of Abram. Genesis 12:3 tells us, ***“I will bless those who bless you, ... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*** In Galatians 3:8, Paul says, ***“the scripture, foreseeing that God would reckon as righteous the gentiles by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “All the gentiles shall be blessed in you.”***

Paul reminds us that all who are called to faith in Jesus are children of Abraham. In so, all believers of every age and nation share in Abraham’s blessing as children of God.

#### **4. We are the Light of the World**

What does this mean for followers of Jesus today? Just as God chose Abraham and the people of Israel, God chooses us to bless others. Matthew 5:14 & 16 say, ***“You are the light of the world. ...<sup>16</sup> let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”***

Jesus tells his disciples and all of us that we are to shine like lights, showing others who Jesus is. Jesus tells us not to shut off our lights to others. How can the world see the light of Christ through us? The world sees the light of Christ through the things that we say and the good works that we do as God’s people.

#### **5. Korean Tourists in Buffalo**

Last December, there was a news story of ten Korean tourists that got stuck in the snow near Buffalo, New York. The group was on its way to Niagara Falls from Washington DC. Two of the men in the group decided to knock at a nearby house to ask for shovels to help get the van out of the ditch. Alex Campagna, a local dentist, and his wife invited the group of Korean tourists to their home, putting them up on couches, in sleeping bags, on an air mattress, and in a spare bedroom for two nights until the storm cleared.

Those ten people will never forget the good Samaritans who helped shelter them in their time of need. Alex and his wife were certainly a light to those who were in need.

#### **6. Conclusion**

700 years before Jesus, the people of Israel were faced with severe judgment because of their disobedience to God. The Prophet Isaiah warned the people that Babylon would destroy their country and exile the people. Despite the judgment, Isaiah gave a reason to hope in the four Servant songs, describing the coming of God's Servant to bring deliverance and joy in the midst of trouble.

When we read Isaiah 42:1, the Lord says, "**Here is my servant whom I uphold. My chosen, in whom my soul delights,**" We see God's image as a proud father in the passage. Christ was born to serve others and shine a light to the world. In his Servant, the Lord brings forth justice to all God's people. The Lord turns all things to right through his justice.

## 7. Application

Many things in the world today don't seem fair. Many people continue to suffer in war or strife. Isaiah 60:1 says, "**Arise, shine, and your light has come. And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.**"

The Bible tells us that Jesus has come to be the light to the world. And each of us is called to be a little light, reflecting the Light of Christ to those around us and to the world through our words and actions here on earth.

The legendary journalist Barbara Walters passed away two weeks ago at the age of 93. In an interview, she said that she wanted to be remembered as a loving mother, a loyal friend and as a person that inspired many other young women. Throughout the week, many reflected on Barbara Walters' positive impact on their lives through her care and inspiring work.

As followers of Jesus, each of us is called to make a big impact in the world. Do you know that people bring food and clothes for our blessing box? They want to share what they have with those who need help in the community. I'm glad that we can see people who make a difference in our homes, at church, and in our community. When we do this, we shine our light in the world and reflect Jesus to others, the Light of the World.

What is your resolution for 2023? I pray that each of us have the resolution to shine the light of Jesus to the world. May each of us find joy in God's calling and plan for our lives this upcoming year, and may we use our lives to serve those in need around us. Then God may rejoice in our lives and in the light we shine onto others. Amen.