
Shine on Us – The Glory

Isaiah 42:1-9

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Introduction Tis the season to be jolly – why?

Will we allow the world to drag this time of year down into its materialistic, pantheistic, humanistic mud?

How will we redeem what was supposed to be about God but often is not?

I want this morning to hold up a magnificent text and through it to focus your eyes to see the glory that throbs in this season.

The Servant Coming with Justice (v.1-4)

In this first of the great servant texts in Isaiah, God publicly commends His Son in the powerful gentleness and enduring strength of His coming with justice. The servant is identified in Isaiah as both Israel and the Messiah, the Lord Jesus. The overlapping identities here are fulfilled in Jesus who is the servant Himself, both as the Messiah and the new Israel.

God speaks here in the first person. These verses are structured around the pronouns. It is God speaking about what He will do, what the servant will accomplish and why He does it.

The Validation of His Ministry (v.1)

God asserts three important things that show His approval on the servant:

God has chosen Him. He has been selected out by God in this way.

God delights in Him. He is the object of God's love and joy.

God places His Spirit on Him. He has the Spirit on Him without measure.

So what does this mean for us? O, we are also God's servants, even much like Jesus. No, not as divine or eternal. But rather, we are to see ourselves as servants of the King like Jesus is identified here.

We have been chosen by God. God's choice of us causes our choice of Him.

We are the objects of God's delight. We love Him because He first loved us.

God has placed His Spirit in us. This is the mark of the New Covenant age; all God's people have new hearts by the indwelling of the Spirit.

The Gentleness of His Ministry (v.2-3)

God sends His servant to bring about justice. Now, we tend to associate the word justice with a system of law that is rightly given, interpreted, applied and enforced. Justice is

what a victim receives when the guilty are punished. Justice has a larger idea in the Old Testament. It has to do with a right practice of religion in relation to God. Thus to do justice is not merely to defend the victim, but to live in right relation to God and in conformity to what He requires at all times in all ways.

Thus, the servant will bring about all this justice, this right relationship with God and conformity to His Word *in all the people groups*. The servant will not only deal with Israel, but will also carry His justice into all the world. Having God's approval on Him authorizes Him to go beyond the Jews and to take the justice of the Word of God to all the nations.

Now, how will He do that? Will He, as probably most Jews of Isaiah's day would have thought, taken the Law of God and subdued the Gentiles so that they would live under it? No, the startling thing here is that when the Messiah, the Servant comes to bring a right relationship to God into the world He does so with gentleness. He is not loud and assertive. He is meek and mild. He does not reach out and snap off struggling reeds or snuff out smoldering candles. He is gentle. He sees those who struggle and moves toward them in a way that sustains them and changes them.

The New Testament points back to this chapter and specifically applies it to the Lord Jesus (Matthew 12:15-21). He is the servant God has chosen, loved and given the Spirit. He is the one who engages honest, struggling people with grace and gentleness. His justice is the righteousness of God lived out in life and overflowing with love from God for people.

We are meant to take heart from this and to move and act like this. In Matthew, he interprets verse 4 with the simple phrase, "in Him will the Gentiles hope." So our ministry in the world will be like the Lord's. You will take into account the terrible conditions of fallenness. You will move with humble patience and gentleness towards the weak and spiritually needy. And, you will challenge and correct when necessary. You will live in right relationship with God and in conformity to His Word.

The Strength of His Ministry

(v.4)

But this gentleness does not imply weakness. His justice will be spread with enduring strength until it has reached into all the people groups. He moves with powerful, undiscouraged, unswayed patience and persistence until what He has been sent to accomplish is done.

Now we know, because of the New Testament, that He did not accomplish this in the span of His years here on earth. He has not accomplished it yet. We are a part of the extension of that righteousness. We do so by proclaiming the good news of this Servant, of Jesus. We have been entrusted with that ministry to act on His behalf and in His stead. So, like Jesus we must never quit. We must not become discouraged. We must never act as though its success is dependent on us. We must be determined to be faithful. And we do so until we die or until He comes.

The Covenant Given to Save

(v.5-7)

God has authenticated His servant. He speaks about Him. Now God turns in these verses to address His servant. He speaks to Him. Listen to the glorious things that are said to Him.

By the Grandness in God

(v.5)

What God is going to do arises out of the greatness and grandness of who He is and what He has done. God asserts that He is creator and sustainer of all. He stands over it as its sovereign. He is not only the source of the world in the beginning, He is its continual sustainer. He upholds it by the Word of His power, as the preacher in Hebrews says. He is also the source of each person alive. We are not merely the random chance genetic result of sexual union. We exist because God has caused us to come into being. Yes, He is pleased to use the physical process He designed and made as a means. But, we owe our very being to God. Further, God is the sustainer of every living being. He gives us breath. Nothing is more needful for on-going life than breath. God is here declaring that He is the sovereign, the source and sustainer of all.

Let us never forget this. That God made the world and that God rules the world are so tied together that to deny one is to deny the other. This why the assault in paganism on the Bible's account(s) of creation. If God did not make all things, then all things are not accountable to Him. He may be a local, tribal, cultural or even personal God. But He has no universal authority over all humans, much less over creation.

In the Commitments by God

(v.6)

I did not know whether to call this the commitments by God or the acts of God. Both are implied here. In speaking to the servant, the Lord Jesus, God is promising what He will do. And what He promised He performed.

He called the Servant in righteousness.

Jesus is brought forward by God as the sum, source and final revealer of His righteousness. Yes, He kept the Law and lived a totally holy life. But this did not make Him righteous, it was the expression of a righteousness that was innate and fundamental to His being. Therefore, God has held Him up as our righteousness. He is the righteousness to which we look. His righteousness is put to or imputed to our account. His righteousness grants us acceptance with God. His righteousness is our justice, our right standing before God and right relationship to Him.

He guided and guarded the Servant in the world.

In a sentence of both tenderness and thundering power, God asserts that the Servant's life is under His care, His guiding and His guarding. He will provide and protect. He is like a parent, taking a child by the hand, and making sure that the dangerous crossing is navigated safely.

He united the Servant with His people.

Two things are being asserted here. Please bear with me because this just sets my heart to racing.

- Jesus is both God and man in the incarnation. The servant here will be both divine and human in a true mysterious union. But God has chosen out of His sovereign privilege and power to unite us together in the person of His Son.
- Jesus is the New Covenant. The New Covenant has propositions, statements of promise and fact. We find these in several places in the New Testament. But what I see here, as in other places, that Jesus Himself is the New Covenant. God chose Him, delights in Him and makes Him the locus of His Spirit. God has chosen us, delights in us and makes us the dwelling of His Spirit.

For the Purposes of God

(v.6b-7)

O what precious purposes God had in the Servant. What a mighty work the servant has done for all the peoples for whom He is their righteousness, to whom He has brought God's justice.

This is expressed as the servant being made a light. He is the revelation of God. He is the out raying of the glory of God. He is brightness of God's purity, the warmth of God's love, the illumination of God's character. He is the light.

But see what the servant, the covenant, the light is to do. He will open blind eyes. He will release the prisoners from the dungeon of their darkness. What does this mean? I see two important ideas here.

God will make it possible for us to see the light.

Seeing Jesus as the light is not a natural thing. It requires a direct and immediate work of God. I cannot change my blindness. I cannot remove the spiritual scales that darkens my soul and blinds my heart from seeing the Light.

God will give the light of truth to deliver us from the darkness of error and ignorance.

Error and ignorance are prisons from which we must be delivered by the light of truth. It is the truth that sets us free. Now I loathe the misuse of that phrase by media, by newspapers, journalists and even scientists. Jesus is not saying just any truth will set you free. But the truth about Jesus will set you from the enslaving power of your sin and the darkening affect of your blindness.

The Glory Bringing Forth the New

(v.8-9)

What God is doing in salvation for the Gentiles will magnify His glory and be a new thing. Watch the flow here carefully.

In the Defense of His Reputation

(v.8)

What a thundering statement this is! God's name, reputation and glory are all woven together. They are not the same thing. But where His Name is denied, His Lordship defied, His glory is burgled. His Name is uniquely His own. His Name puts His character on public display. He does not put that name to another nor allow another to use it in vain. No man nor idol may assume the use of that name without bringing dire consequence.

Yet, something else is here. If God will give His glory to no other, yet the servant bears and broadcasts that glory, then the servant must be God. Here is what God through Isaiah is declaring here. "*Since*, I the Lord do not give my Name and its glory to another, certainly not to idols, and *since* the Servant, the Branch, the Messiah bears my Name and my Glory, *then* He is God."

So we are warned not to pollute the greatness of the glory of God's name and fame. We are also called to acknowledge the One who has come full of grace and truth, through whom we have seen the glory of God. The servant here, the one who came as a baby, is Immanuel, God with us. There is no disconnect between the God's honor and God's humility. The chosen, loved, and Spirit infused servant may bear the Name and proclaim the glory of God.

In the Declaration of His Intention

(v.9)

When the One comes, when the servant appears who bears the name and proclaims the glory of God, then the old is past and the new has come. Till then, God was speaking through His prophets like Isaiah to declare what He was going to do. All the Old Testament points to and speaks of the Lord Jesus. But, as the Old Covenant was coming to a close, more and more the prophetic words were announcing a glorious new thing that would come to pass.

So, when Jesus is born, the angelic announcement to Mary and Joseph, the angelic acclaim to the shepherds all is meant to take great texts like this and say, "Here He is. Here is the servant, chosen, loved, Spirit infused who brings justice, righteousness to all the people groups because He bears the Name and the Glory of Yahweh."

God has exalted the Lord Jesus Christ to be the object of our allegiance and affection. This season of the year ought to draw that out even more. What awe and joy, what amazement and humility should fill our hearts. We should be like everyone who saw the Christ child. They wondered. They were amazed. They worshipped. They went home changed.

Conclusion

This advent season when we have chosen to celebrate the Lord's birth is the season to announce the Lord's salvation. His coming brought light to the blind, deliverance to the captive, salvation to the lost. Say so. Say it often. Say it to everyone. Live it out.

You can live it out on Advent Sunday by being here to worship and bringing someone with you. What better way to spend a Christmas morning than to worship with God's people around the songs and the story of Jesus' birth.

You can live it out by responding to God's great gift of His Son with a special gift of your own to the Lord. We encourage you to consider a special offering as God enables and provides.

God is jealous for His glory. He will give it to no other. So much so that He sent His Son into the world to bear His Name, to broadcast His fame and to beacon His glory. Are your eyes opened to see? Then believe and bow now. Humble yourself before the great King.

Move into people's lives in this season of the year like Jesus does – with righteousness, mercy and gentleness.

Seek the Lord while He may be found. May His light shine on you so that you will see by faith the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.