

Second Servant Song: Light

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[0 : 00] The following message was given at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com.

Isaiah chapter 49 verses 1 through 13. 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 in vanity. Yet surely my right is with the Lord, and my recompense with my God.

[1 : 12] 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. 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.

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, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages, saying to the prisoners, Come out!

[2 : 42] To those who are in darkness, appear! They shall feed along the ways, on all bare heights, shall be their pasture. 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. And I will make all my mountains erode, and my highways shall be raised up.

Behold, these shall come from afar, and behold, these from the north, and from the west, and these from the land of Syene. 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. This is the word of the Lord.

Listen. Listen. Hearing that command honestly brings back a lot of memories for me personally. Parents, librarians, babysitters, coaches, teachers, listen.

[3 : 59] Heard it lots of times. It's usually a command from someone in charge to grab attention to the ones that they're in charge of, to give a message. In the movie Matilda, a deadbeat dad, called for his daughter's attention to give her a message.

Listen, you little wiseacre. I'm smart, you're dumb. I'm big, you're small. I'm right, you're wrong, and there's nothing you can do about it.

Well, in this case, the call to listen led to a message intended to shut her down. But on another note, I recently saw a video of a couple parents and they're calling their two younger kids in the back seat in the car to listen.

They had a very important message whenever they got into the car. The mom handed the little six or seven year old boy a box and asked him to open it. So he opens the box and inside he found passes to go to Disney World.

The kid started to pump his fists in delight a few times. He's kind of in shock. Then he froze and you see his face just crinkle up with tears because the gravity of the surprise was starting to set in. [5 : 15] He couldn't purchase these tickets on his own. He couldn't even work to purchase these tickets. He couldn't drive to get to this place.

His parents did not owe any of this to him. From start to finish, this was an extravagant gift. An extravagant gift. An overwhelming kindness.

So with tears flowing down the little boy like quickly unbuckles his seatbelt. He climbs over the console with tears flowing to embrace his mother and let out the series of astonished thank you, thank you, thank you.

The extraordinary gift had its intended effect. Joyfully drawing near to the gift giver with astonished thankfulness.

The call to listen can bring about one of two results. It can stifle you into silence or it can kindle the flames of thanksgiving and joy. It really depends on the message that follows.

[6 : 20] Maybe you're here and you're feeling weary and burdened. perhaps you are sick with no hope of a cure on the horizon or you're experiencing the pain of a strained relationship or maybe the pain of an absent relationship or maybe you're coasting along with superficial comforts but you feel apathetic or dry toward the Lord or maybe you're enslaved to a secret sin and you feel paralyzed by shame.

No matter where you are this morning the servant in Isaiah calls out to you listen listen and I trust that his message will have its intended effect on your heart because the last verse of our text if you just look at it in verse 13 begins with this command sing for joy this message right here was given to stir your joy to the point that you can't help but climb over the console with astonished thanksgiving to draw near to the gift giver with songs of joy I think that the main message this morning quite simply is this rejoice in the surprising compassion of our global God who saves us through Christ rejoice in the surprising compassion of our global God who saves us through Christ we'll look at this in three moves verses 1-5 the servant who brings glory the servant who brings light and the servant who brings salvation so let's look at verses 1-5 the servant who brings glory well verse 1 just begins with this blast listen to me who is this that's demanding our attention so often when grabbing a mic at a conference or something like that to make an address you need to state your credentials up front to help the audience know why should we listen to you and the bigger the audience the more substantial the credentials better be well who is the audience that's being called to listen by this speaker this speaker demands the attention of the coastlands and beyond he's calling for the ear of the whole world so who could this be that demands the ear of every person on the planet what are his credentials if you scan through verses 1 and 2 he claims to be called by the Lord that's Yahweh all caps

Lord from the womb he's named by Yahweh he has a mouth like a sharp sword by Yahweh in verse 2 also you see that he's an arrow in the quiver of Yahweh in verse 2 in other words all the credentials the speaker gives are directly related to the personal initiative of Yahweh the one true God of heaven and earth so the speaker is presenting himself as one with a mouth like a sharp sword and being an arrow in the quiver of Yahweh he's saying he's the weapon directly carrying out the mission from God himself the sword is his mouth he will accomplish God's mission not by not by military force but by a revelation of God's word and will so already first two verses we're already finding these soundings of the Messiah that would be fulfilled in the person of Jesus

Christ within 700 years we read that Jesus the word became flesh and dwelt among us but this speaker doesn't stop endorsing himself all of us know people who talk a big game but then can't back up what they're saying right well it helps to have others these witnesses back you up like when you're getting ready to order a book a lot of times I'll scan the endorsements to see who else is backing this message people that I know and trust so who does the speaker have as an endorsement you look at verse 3 and he speaking of Yahweh said to me you are my servant Israel in whom I will be glorified so Yahweh is speaking up on behalf of the servant not only that he puts complete confidence in him he is my servant he belongs to me he expresses my will and my way this is the servant who will glorify

Yahweh to glorify it's kind of a weird term we don't use a lot it means to express his true value to accentuate worth to hold him up say look at this and what is this servant's name who's glorifying God's name is Israel now this should raise some flags for you at this point because this servant that demands the ear of the whole earth he has the credentials of being the word and the weapon of

God and has Yahweh's confidence that he will bring him the glory that's due to his name is this the same Israel from last week from chapter 42 as Walt mentioned last week that that word servant can sometimes be associated with the nation Israel on the last part of chapter 42 we see the Lord addressing the servant in chapter 42 as deaf and blind deaf and blind servant so the servant described in

[12 : 30] Isaiah 49 in our text is not the blind and deaf servant in those verses look at the servant in verse 5 and now the Lord says he who formed me from the womb to be his servant to bring back Jacob to him and that Israel might be gathered to him for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord so the servant Israel here in these verses is sent on a mission to bring back Jacob and to gather Israel what he sent to rescue the scattered people of God so how can Israel save Israel how could a nation that could not find its way to God a blind deaf rebellious nation show anyone else the way this is the dilemma that the servant in Isaiah 49 has come to resolve because this servant is an individual distinct from the nation

Israel's mission was to show the nations how to come to God how can we know God and this servant will be for Israel and the world what Israel failed to be God provides a substitute Israel who does live up to the name this servant will perfectly fulfill God's purposes he will do what has been left undone so what exactly will this servant do what would you think would be the top priority to get sorted out when surrounded by an oppressive group of enemy nations and being forcibly removed from your homeland what would be top priority for you let's look again at the servant's mission according to verse five the servant would restore

Jacob to him and Israel would be gathered to him that is to God this is at the top of the list oppression enemies homelessness exile those are those are needs to be addressed absolutely but there's actually a greater need John Oswald a theologian rightly captures the issue saying this Israel's real problem was not captivity in Babylon it was estrangement from God the same is true for us our main problem is not sickness it's not financial problems it's not marriage issues hard relationships it's not bad bosses it's not broken homes it's not even addiction those are all circumstances but what is under the surface let me ask you a couple just diagnostic questions when hard times hit what do you place your trust in what is it that animates your desires does God factor in to your trusts and your desires do you find yourself depending on him or daydreaming about bringing him glory is this servant is coming to restore us from a godless life to a God filled life to be in right relationship with the one who created us it's a life that that's not on our own anymore thrashed about by changing circumstances good and bad it's a life in a way that we were meant to actually live in thankful dependence and joy in our maker separation from God is our main problem because of our rebellion so reconnecting to God is the main solution offered by this servant have you received this offer this is the offer of the gospel point to the servant who brings light in verse six the servant who brings light

I recently got into a conversation with a guy about religion and I asked him if he had any experience going to church he kind of awkwardly smiled at me and then he said he thought he burst into flames if he ever stepped into a church maybe you feel like this guy maybe it's a miracle you're here like maybe you feel like you've done too much wrong like you're too far gone maybe you think that you're outside the range of this salvation well who did the servant come for is there just enough salvation to go around for the Israelites look at verse 6 is it 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 so salvation for just [18 : 52] Jacob and Israel it's too little of a thing it's too light of a thing it's as if you know we're sitting playing piano and no one knows how to play this thing and we're just scanning around can anybody play jingle bells here does anybody know how to do that in desperation you're trying to find someone that can poke!

bong! bong! bong! bong! nobody knows how to do it so you say is there anyone that can do it just imagine if Beethoven or Handel were in the audience and they raised their hand it's like okay how about you give it a shot and they're like maybe I have a different idea that's the significance it's as if we're looking around for someone that's strong enough for this challenge but the task of restoring! Israel to himself is not a restoration to the land of Judah rather it's the restoration of an estranged world to God this servant will be a light for the nations so the emphasis on the light here is symbolic in so many ways like if the light is cut off in here right now I'm sure there would be a number of us screaming and we'd all freak out it'd be very disorienting but light drives out darkness it brings vision

it brings clarity and those realities that we observe in nature they help us understand the wonderful symbolism of the servant's work here because wherever the darkening effects of sin are found the light of salvation breaks through this servant brings vision he brings clarity we can understand who we are in relation to

God to the world and to one another we can come out of isolation we can gather into community because of this light all the disorienting lies that we used to believe are brought to light so that we can see and we can know truth we can know beauty we can respond to it there's this attractiveness to light the servant's reach extends across the whole globe!

place there's no person outside the scope of this light's reach the servant he radiates the glory of God in order that all people might trace the light back to the source to find God himself!

[21 : 34] that's why when Jesus came into the world there was a man named Simeon who broke out in celebration at the dawning fulfillment of this prophecy these are his words in Luke 2 Lord now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples!

a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel it's extraordinary he's saying this is the fulfillment he's here the light of truth has come and Jesus himself unabashedly claims the identity that we're seeing here of the servant look at what it says in John 8 the very words of Jesus I am the light of the world whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life maybe you you've had your doubts about Jesus maybe you're not so sure if we could really believe all this stuff and all these prophecies please consider this astonishing fact you and I are a part of this prophecy fulfillment us in here are a part of this prophecy fulfillment not only did Isaiah predict the servant's work the servant has come he came and over the last 2000 years the light has reached across cultures and languages and mountains and oceans so that somehow you and I right now far off Gentiles are speaking about the things of God in English in East Tennessee let that baffle you just for a second please just think about this we are living walking proof of the reality and the reach of this light that we're reading about us in here we can trust him we can trust him to accomplish his purposes!

Listen Trinity Grace Church Listen to the servant his light has reached you you can trust him oh brothers and sisters it's worth considering this afternoon how did the light reach you how did that happen well we if you think about it long enough we can all trace it back to God's people somehow whether parents or Sunday school teachers or VBS or even resources like books or radio programs even those things can be traced back to shafts of light coming from God's people all of it according to scripture Jesus Christ is the light both to and through his people to and through his people we already saw

Simeon talking about Jesus being the fulfillment of this prophecy of the light but then we see Paul applying the same prophecy after Jesus earthly ministry this way Acts 13 for so the Lord has commanded us Paul and Barnabas saying I have made you a light for the Gentiles Paul and Barnabas the light for the Gentiles that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth and when the Gentiles heard this they began rejoicing!

[25 : 35] and glorifying the word of the Lord and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed God do you see Paul is applying this to the work that he and Barnabas are involved in telling the good news of Jesus making a way for those cut off from God to be brought into relationship with God Paul is extending the reach of the light to Christ to a new set of people in darkness and what's the result rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord they move from life in the darkness of sin to life in the light of Christ and God's continuing to do this same work today he's doing it right now he's extending the reach of the light of Christ into the darkness through his people people like me and you well friends light light tends to shine brightest in the darkest places where are the dark places in

McMinn County when you think about it where where do you see the darkness of sin and separation from God how might the light of Christ extend its reach in this place of the globe maybe it's the darkness of isolation and loneliness what would it look like for people like us to bring the light of Christ to our neighborhoods things like Clem Jones taking cookies introducing yourself asking for prayer requests inviting people to church or maybe it's the darkness of broken families fatherlessness abandonment what would it look like for people like us to bring the light of Christ through foster care And adoption wouldn't it be great if we just drained the foster system in McMinn County wouldn't that be wonderful well maybe it's the darkness of grief divorce addiction homelessness health problems how might the light of Christ extend its reach through us if you have

a particular place or people on your mind I'd love to talk with you more because God delights to draw people from the dark into the light and this room is filled with examples of that miracle and God delights to extend the reach of Christ's light through people like me and you point three the servant who brings!

we've already seen that the servant brings glory he brings light but when we come to verse seven there's a surprising twist verse seven it says thus says the Lord the redeemer of Israel and his holy one to one deeply despised abhorred by the nation the servant of rulers there's this massive difference between the Lord and the servant that we're seeing here the Lord he's Yahweh he's this redeemer of Israel he's the holy one everything points to his power his royalty his uniqueness and then you have the servant he's described as deeply despised he's abhorred by the nation he's a servant he's like a slave to rulers so what is this the one who supposedly brings glory and light is depicted as a nobody he's considered worthless by those around him it's this shocking twist not the description we would expect but consider the similarities to

Jesus' entrance into the world not only was he a member of an oppressed oppressed people under Roman rule he was from the bottom rungs of this oppressed!

[30 : 05] people he was from a small rural blue collar town he was the lowest of the low by all accounts he was not impressive at all he had no earthly!

procedure power as a result his claims to be the Messiah they were met with animosity it could be said that the nation abhorred him John's gospel says John 1 11 he came to his own and his own people did not receive him but then look at the difference between the servant at the beginning of the verse and then the end of the verse at verse 7 by the end it says kings shall see and arise princes and they shall prostrate themselves lay down and worship and homage to this servant so the worthless despised servant becomes the astonishment and respected by the kings at the end of the verse so though he's perceived by all around him as unworthy of any respect he becomes the recipient of all respect so how does this shift happen here's how it happens verse 7 says the Lord chooses the Lord chooses verse 7 because of the Lord who is faithful the Holy One of Israel who has chosen you see God works in spite of weakness to display even more clearly his power and his character that's how he does things why does God do it this way 1 Corinthians 1 says it wonderfully but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong so that as it is written let the one who boasts boast in the Lord! You see God gets more glory more honor more prestige by displaying his power through weakness and not only will this unexpected servant experience himself a great reversal he will usher in a great reversal for those we least expect look at verse 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 so we see that there's this time of favor a day of salvation where the servant will be given as a covenant this language is borrowed from the practice of jubilee the year of jubilee which came every 50th year for the people it was it was a year full of releasing people from their debts releasing slaves and returning property to those who owned it but there's a couple of problems with the language of covenant and jubilee here first the people had broken the covenant again and again and again so the covenant was actually obsolete it was legally void at this point and second the people would be stripped from the land they wouldn't even be there so there would be no context for the year of jubilee so what is he talking about well just as there was a need for a new and better servant there would be a new and better jubilee and a new and better covenant the new jubilee would not just be this local jubilee it's too light a thing but a global jubilee and the covenant wouldn't just be a reiteration of the old one written on stone tablets with words but a new covenant with the word

Jesus Christ written on people's hearts so we needed to be saved not just externally we needed to be saved from the inside out across the globe so Jesus came to do all that we left undone he gave his life as a substitute for all who receive his sacrifice he freely offers his righteousness in exchange for our sin there is nothing that we can do to earn this absolutely nothing to all who desire to be made right with God you must let go of all your own efforts and lift up the open hands of faith to receive the gift of grace listen listen there's a new covenant being offered to you this morning second corinthians wonderfully captures this very thing it says this for our sake for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of

[35 : 34] God working together with him then we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain for he says in a favorable time I listen to you and in a day of salvation I have helped you behold

now is the favorable time behold now is the day of salvation I extend this offer to you now is the day of salvation for those who receive the new covenant of Christ the final few verses reveal the salvation that is in store it reveals what's in store verse 9 he says to the prisoners come out to those who are in darkness heights even those places will be their pasture verse 10 they shall not hunger or thirst neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them nor he who has pity on them will lead them and by springs of water he will guide them make my mountains a road my highways shall be raised up in these final few verses we hear these echoes of the exodus way back at the beginning of your Bible same kind of language God's people were miraculously released from Egypt theologian Alec Matier suggested this Isaiah here in our text speaks of the release of prisoners and a journey to a new land the reality however is a release from bondage into the freedom of the truth and a pilgrimage not of the feet but of mind and heart into the newness the servant has brought about he's releasing us from sin and bondage are you living imprisoned to sin or are you living in the freedom Jesus Christ has purchased if you're stuck in Egypt Jesus has opened up a way of escape through his provision embrace salvation today is the day of salvation in the name of Jesus come out of the prison stop living as a slave today is the day of salvation he's opened up a way for you that's not your home anymore back in Egypt you don't have to be there anymore you've been freed to walk in relationship with the living God today is the day of salvation today confess! for you today oh friends lastly what I want you to see here is it's so comforting to see in our text that God intends to provide for those who are released from prison he intends to walk with us there is a wilderness journey between Egyptian bondage and the enjoyment of the promised land well in a similar way we may have experienced freedom from the penalty of sin through Jesus Christ but we are yet to experience the fullness of our redemption and relationship with God forever that's still to come but here in our text we see that God he will provide for and protect his people as a shepherd provides for and protects his sheep in the wilderness he transforms even a barren hill into this lush pasture and he gives relief from the scorching sun beating down all the trials all the outward pressures of life he guides towards refreshing water things that will bring you life well this is this is a picture for us friends this is a picture of our total vulnerability and dependence and God's total power and provision our vulnerability and dependence God's total power and provision it's a shocking display of God's posture towards those who receive the salvation of this servant he not only sets us free from sin he compassionately guides us each step of the way through the wilderness until we can rest in his presence forever that's what's ahead for the Christian that's what's ahead for you and I where is it in your life that you need to trust him right now oh listen he can and he will provide for you Jesus love never failed me yet he won't fail you he hasn't set you free only to abandon you in the wilderness now so what's what's the intended response to a message like this oh verse 13 it says sing for joy sing for joy exult break forth even the earth will do it even the mountains will break into singing for the

[40 : 52] Lord has comforted his people he will have compassion on his afflicted Jesus Christ is the servant who brings glory to God where we have failed he is the servant who brings light to all those in darkness even those in this YMCA he is the servant who brings salvation to those who could not save themselves listen Trinity Grace in spite of our sin in spite of your sin the Lord has chosen to chase us down with kindness undeserved kindness let us rejoice in the surprising compassion of our global God who saves us through Jesus Christ let's climb over the console with astonished thanksgiving to draw near to this gift giver with songs of joy would you join me in prayer Lord we praise you for your kindness we are astonished at your goodness towards those who rebelled against you it was too light of thing for just a few people your cup is overflowing with abundant grace and you invite us to come and drink without any kind of worry of it being depleted your grace will always outpace our sin and our need so

Lord we come to you afresh now with thanksgiving in our hearts and joy and a song on our lips would you receive all the praise and glory through Jesus Christ amen you've been listening to a message at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens for more information about Trinity Grace please visit us at trinity grace at trinity grace Athens dot com