

**THE SERVANT AS GENTLE JUDGE**  
**Isaiah 42:1-4**

“The Humble Pope”, read the headlines everywhere last week, speaking of the new Pope, Francis.

After being elected, he is still staying in the same hotel, instead of the royal suite reserved for him.

When ordained a cardinal in Argentina, he chose to live in a small apartment rather than a mansion.

Instead of a chauffer-driven car, he chose public transport.

He has chosen the name Francis, after the 13<sup>th</sup> c. St. Francis of Assisi, the great symbol of poverty, simplicity, and charity.

And last week’s inaugural Mass was much simpler, and an hour shorter, than the baroque splendour of his predecessor Benedict’s inauguration in 2005. (He asked Argentinians to save their money and not buy tickets to Rome for his inauguration, but rather to give it to the poor.)

What does all of this tell you? – People are drawn to humble leaders. – We love those who are different from the norm in this power-hungry world, those who think little of themselves, who are meek and lowly, i.e., who have a servant-attitude.

Just one problem: *Pope Francis is the servant of Rome, not of God.* – He is the servant of a false church, that teaches a false gospel, a gospel of salvation by grace plus works, through faith plus works, in Christ plus works. – That’s a big problem.

Francis may be a servant, but he is Rome’s servant, not God’s.

Where then can we find the great Servant-Leader that we long for, this ideal Man, the perfect Pastor,

one who is humble-yet-mighty, one will bring real justice to a broken world and true healing to the nations?

Turn to Isa. 42...

Read text & Pray:

For your own reading later:

vv. 5-9, Isaiah ends each of the Servant Songs by confirming & strengthening what was just prophesied. – Just in case we think it all sounds ‘too good to be true’?!....

vv. 10ff, the only appropriate response to this great hope we have in Christ and in His justice: a song of praise!

Give title...

**\*THREE REASONS to behold Christ, God's Servant & Gentle Judge:**

As John the Baptist also commands us, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

v. 1 – In stark contrast to Isaiah's previous two "Behold, Listen up!" statements: 41:24, 29 (the idols & idol-worshipping nations)....

From "Behold you," and "Behold they," to "Behold" HIM. – After looking at the emptiness of idols, and the emptiness of idolaters, look at Christ, in all His fullness & glory.

**1. v. 1, Because of WHO the Servant is**

v. 1a – In the ancient world, when a king said of someone, "My Servant", it often = an ambassador, the public spokesman for the king. – But hearing Isaiah's prophecy with NT ears, verses like these come to mind:

"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to SERVE, and to give His life a ransom for many," Mk. 10:45

Or Php. 2, Christ "did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-SERVANT"

Reread: Isa. 42:1a...

That's why this is the first of Isaiah's four Servant Songs, four messianic prophecies that predict the coming of a special Servant of the LORD. –

He is one of the most important figures in the OT, yet often neglected.

The NT plainly tells us who this Servant of the LORD is: It is Jesus Christ our Lord & Saviour.

This is why the NASB & NKJV capitalise "Servant" here, even though there are no capitals in Hebrew.

In my Good Friday message, I'll try to delve a bit deeper into this debate about the different "Servants" in Isaiah...

v. 1a – NB, He is "upheld, gripped":

As we're about to see, this Servant will be sent on a humanly impossible mission. – If God does not "uphold & strengthen" Him, He is doomed to fail.

v. 1b – WHO first chose Jesus? – You & me? – Some college of 120 cardinals in the Vatican?

Or maybe He's just the 'white man's' choice of religion, or the invention of the apostles, or a crutch for the emotionally weak? – Think so?...

Oh no, He is God's choice, the Darling of Heaven, God's Favourite:

At Jesus' Transfiguration on the mountain, the voice out of the cloud declares, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!" (Lk. 9:35) –

Or as 1 Pet. 1:20 puts it, Christ was "foreknown before the foundation of the world", the Lamb who was slain from before time began, in the mind & plan of God (Rev. 13:8).

As we're about to see, the task to which this Servant is called is a task so difficult & demanding that NO ONE would ever choose such a task for himself. – No one would ever sign up for such a mission.

He would have to be chosen & called to it, by God Himself.

But did God LIKE the choice He made, or did He just have to tolerate Him and live with the decision? – HOW does God feel about Jesus? – Isa. 42:1b...

Both at Jesus baptism AND His Transfiguration, what did God say? – 'You are My Beloved Son'. – No one brings a bigger smile to God's face. – 'My very soul delights in Him,' says the LORD. –

From all eternity, back, back, back before time began, God has delighted in His Son, who reflects the radiant image of His Father (Jn. 17; Heb. 1; Col. 2, etc.).

BY WHAT power will Christ fulfil His mission & perform His work in this world? – NOT the empty "wind" of the false gods: 41:29c...

No, Christ will be fuelled by the true Wind of God: v. 1c...  
(Cf. Isa. 11:2; 66:1)

So it was at Jesus' baptism, the dove descended on Him – depicting God's Almighty Spirit who would empower & enable His Servant on His great mission. –

But NB, a "dove", not an eagle or falcon or hawk. – A dove, known for gentleness, meekness & quietness.

No one on earth ever has been or ever will be as Spirit-filled and Spirit-anointed & Spirit-empowered as Jesus. (cf. Matt. 3:16; Lk 4:18, etc.)

NB, people say you can't find the Trinity in the OT. – But here they are, all 3 members of the Triune Godhead: reread v. 1 (God the Father, God the Son/Servant, God the Spirit, in perfect agreement)...

→Feeling cold in your affections for Christ? – In danger of "losing your first love"? – As Jim Berg has taught us, don't track your feelings, track your thoughts:

If my feelings for Christ are not what they should be, I must ask, 'What am I thinking about Christ? Am I viewing Christ truthfully, the way God views Him? Am I believing the truth about Christ?'

E.G., v. 1 here's how God thinks about Jesus, 'He is MY Servant, upheld by MY hand, as MY Choice and MY Delight, anointed by MY Spirit, and sent on MY mission.'

What is that mission?...

**2. vv. 1d, 3c, 4b, Because of WHAT the Servant will do**

Some important background: Chp. 41 is a courtroom scene, a trial between God and the nations: 41:1, 21....

God is the Judge & prosecuting attorney. – The nations are the defense. – The charge is that the nations worship dead idols that cannot tell the future, explain history or bring justice. – The verdict:

41:28-29...

I.e., the gods of the nations are false gods. – God alone has the answers.

I.E., the greatest empires of Isaiah's day had no answers: The Persian empire in all its glory had no answers.

Greece, even in its Golden Age of philosophy & art & architecture, had no answers to life's ultimate questions. –

The emerging Roman empire would have no answers.

WHO, who could provide a solution to the problems facing humanity? –  
How can we heal a broken, suffering, struggling humanity?

It's as if there was silence in Isaiah's courtroom at the end of chp. 41, UNTIL....another figure is brought in:

42:1....

→ Isn't this always the best remedy? – Getting our eyes off of our problems and on to Christ? – And getting our eyes off of all of the world's false solutions, and instead looking to Christ.

WHAT will be the mission of this great Servant? – What is it that His Master (God) wants Him to accomplish in this world?...

Answer: He will bring in what the nations long for and what their idols can never deliver: "justice".

Christ's mission is summed up in one key word, used 3x here in the first 4 vss, the whole point of the Servant's mission:

vv. 1d, 3c, 4b, "justice"...

~ Somebody has said, "Justice is any decision made in *my* favour."

We have trouble defining true justice. – Yet inherently, instinctively, we know certain injustices when we see them.

+ 'Not Fair!, Not Fair!,' says a child. – 'Justice, justice, we demand justice' say the people, both the poor & rich alike. –

“How long, O Lord?!” When will all this lawlessness end? When will the plundering & the corruption ever stop? Give us justice!

Isaiah’s justice = a multi-faceted, rich term. – Essentially it = Christ setting all things right, righting all wrongs. – Esp. (in light of chp. 41) exposing the wrongness of idolatry and rightness of only worshipping the true God. –

Ultimately, this means Christ reigning on the earth in a new kingdom of perfect justice and zero lawlessness or disobedience. – It’s the kind of government everybody dreams of (and longs for) but only Christ can provide, when He returns. – The Servant of the Lord is the only hope for a truly just society. (Deut. 10:18; Isa. 1:17; 16:5; 32:1-2; 61:8; Zech. 7:9)

When He returns, Rev. 20 tells us He will reign for a 1,000 years on the earth, and then bring in the new heavens & new earth. Satan & His demons will be thrown into the Lake of Fire. – All of God’s enemies will be made a footstool under Christ’s feet. – And He shall reign forever & ever, in perfect justice. –

The horrible injustices & inequities of this life will not be worthy of comparing to the eternal glory & permanent justice that awaits us in Christ’s presence.

BUT in the meantime: this “justice” also implies salvation for the lost, before Christ returns (cf. v. 6, “light”; cf. 32:1-2; and “righteousness” in Isa., Psalms, Romans, etc.) – God justifying the unjust by faith alone. – i.e., the Gospel!...

NB here, v. 4c, “justice” is parallel to “His law”, or “instruction”. I.e., Christ will bring right teaching and reveal to us the truth. – The truth about ourselves and our sin, and the truth about the only remedy for our sin, found in the Saviour....

And in this case, God’s coming justice is not a threat to the nations, but a promise – something for which they can “hope, wait expectantly”!

Plus, another clue that this ‘justice missions’ includes MISSION & evangelism:

WHERE will Christ bring this perfect justice? – NOT just to His own family or village or tribe. – NOT just to the Jews. – NOT just to Christians. –

NB, v.1d, “to the nations”; v. 4, “in the earth...the coastlands”.

→O that God would use our study of the Servant Songs this Easter to raise up more missionaries –

those who will go with Christ’s gospel to the ends of the earth, also upheld by God, empowered by God’s Spirit, bringing great delight to God’s heart and salvation to perishing heathen.

YET, there’s a burning question here: HOW is this promise of justice a promise and not a threat to the nations? – If they are God’s enemies, how could this be good news, that God’s Servant (Christ) will put all things right? – HOW is there any hope in this justice that He will bring?...

### **3. vv. 2-4, Because of HOW the Servant will bring justice**

v. 2 – What good is a leader if nobody will listen to Him? – If you can't get your voice to be heard, how will you influence anyone?

Chp. 41 just predicted Cyrus, a coming Persian ruler whom God would use to release Israel from exile and bring them back to their land. – But look at Cyrus' leadership style:

Isa. 41:2, 25 – I.e., that's how the world's leaders usually behave. – Demand respect, crush the opposition.

But then there is Messiah, this Servant of the Lord: v. 2...

Instead of crushing the weak, He will defend them.

Yes, one day Christ will be the Lion who roars. – On that day, He *will cause* His voice to be heard & feared by all.

But it was NOT that way at His first coming: He came not to be served, but to serve. – He came not as the Lion, but as the Lamb, the sacrificial offering for our sins. –

He wasn't born in a royal palace in Jerusalem, but in a manger outside of Bethlehem. – He often withdrew from the crowds to pray.

He stayed in rural Galilee, out of the Jerusalem limelight.

Repeat: v. 2...

(As we saw this morning) He didn't ride into the city on a white stallion, but on the foal of a donkey. – When He was interrogated by His accusers, He did not fight back or retaliate. – He willingly laid down His life and prayed forgiveness for His enemies.

1 Pet. 2:23, “while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously....”

Repeat: v. 2...

Turn to Matt. 12, the main NT text where Isa. 42 is used & shown to be fulfilled in Jesus. – NB the context, against this backdrop:

11:29-30 – Compared to the heavy yoke of the Law & tradition which the Pharisees laid upon you...

12:15-16 – People always ask about this, as I'm sure you've also wondered: 'WHY, after such stunning miracles, why would Jesus stop them from doing the one thing they wanted to do most, to go & tell others?!

Yes, it was partly for practical reasons, lest he excited the mob & stir up their messianic, anti-Roman patriotism (any hotter than it already was).

But Jesus silenced those He healed, NOT just for practical reasons, but also for prophetic reasons, as Matthew goes on to record:

12:17-21...

WHY did Jesus, at this stage of His ministry, tell people to stay quiet instead of testifying about Him? –

Because *He knew that He was* Isaiah’s prophesied “Servant of the Lord”, the Gentle Judge, a ruler like the world had never seen. –

He would not jockey for position. – He wouldn’t clamour for attention, or blow His own trumpet and parade His own policies. –

He would speak gently, act patiently, quietly & submissively, trusting His heavenly Father at all times.

~ Spurgeon: *When Mohammed commenced his enterprise, he announced that Paradise was to be found beneath the shadow of swords and numbers of brave men rushed to the battle. They swept everything before them and stained continents with blood! They carried the name of Allah and Mohammed over Asia and Northern Africa—and seemed intent on conquering Europe—and yet the work done will not endure.*

*The Prophet and his caliphs did, indeed, strive and cry, and cause their voices to be heard in the street—but Christ’s system is the very reverse of that—His weapons are not carnal. Behold His battle-axe and weapons of war! Truth divinely strong with no human force at the back of it but that of holiness and love! A Gospel full of gentleness and mercy to men, proclaimed not by the silver trumpets of kings, but by the plain voices of lowly men!*

→ 1 Pet. 3:15, being ready to defend our faith and explain our hope, “YET with gentleness and reverence”. –

There’s nothing worse than a rude representative of the gentle Saviour.

Not just in our evangelism, but in all our ministry: 2 Tim. 2:24, “And the Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition.

v. 3 – This has to be one of the most comforting verses in the Bible! We so often have a totally wrong concept of God – that He’s only pleased with the strong, with those who’ve got it altogether, those with only minor problems, but no major ones!

Until you read verses like this: v. 3...

→ Christ came especially to bring His justice to the broken & bruised, to those whose light is almost gone out, whose lives are barely flickering, about to be extinguished. – E.G.:

The unsaved person with a bruised conscience and a broken heart over their sin, cut to the heart with conviction, miserable and terrified of the wrath of God – Christ came to save such as these.

Christ also comes to weak & struggling believers: those defeated or broken-hearted; to those whose joys are fading, whose lives have grown dim, to those who are losing hope,

He comes to those harassed by doubts, bombarded by Satan, feeling that their faith hangs by a slender thread....

→Beloved, do you DARE to believe all the comfort in this verse, and to encourage one another in this way?! –

Our Saviour came to prop up the broken reed, and to fan back into flame the smoking flax! –

None was more tender & compassionate than Him. – None cared for the weak & the wounded more than Him (40:11; 50:4; 61:1).

What a comfort, what a personal, loving Saviour!

~ One of my favt. Lines in our Decl. of Faith is in Section 4, under “God the Son”:

“He is the only Mediator, our Prophet, Priest and King, uniting in His wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfections and is therefore in every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and an all-sufficient Saviour.”

→Is this the Christ you know & trust? – Or is your Jesus more of a cruel master just waiting for you to make a mistake? – Is your Jesus some harsh landlord who can’t wait until you miss a payment by one hour so that He can evict you?

O that we would cling to the true Christ of the Bible, that we would ‘Behold the Servant of the Lord’: v. 3...

+ Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*: wondered what kept his fire for God burning when it seemed so low. – Then he was shown the billows behind the scenes, that the Lord kept that fire burning when he felt sure it would go out and felt he was finished!...

v. 4 – NB, exact same Hbr verbs as in v. 3, i.e.: Christ will never burn dim or be a broken reed. – The Servant of the Lord ministers to the defeated, but He never catches the disease! –

He never gives up, never gets fainthearted. – He never says to us, ‘If you fail Me again, that’s it, no more mercy. One more time, and I’m outta here.’ – Or, ‘Boy, if those Christians keep getting persecuted & killed, man, I don’t know I’m gonna build My Church.’

Or, ‘Shew, all that fighting amongs Chritians, all those different churches, denominations, etc., I don’t know how the gospel could advance through that mess?!’

Never, not our Christ: v. 4a...

Unshaken, unmoved, undeterred, unflinching.

Nothing would stop our Lord until He could declare on that cross, “It is finished!” – Here is the first hint that this coming Servant will be a Suffering Servant....

→If Jesus cannot fail, then neither can His Church ultimately. –

If the Head will prevail, then so shall His body and so shall we. As Christ promised, “I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it” (Matt 16:18). –



Thus, with Paul in Rom. 8, “we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (8:37).

~ Spurgeon: *As you look at our blessed Master, patient and immovable amidst all the battle and the strife, you may assure yourself that He will not fail nor be discouraged. I do not admire Napoleon except in the matter of his cool courage, but for that he was noteworthy.*

*They always represent him in the midst of the battle with folded arms. His eagle eyes are on the conflict, but he is motionless as a statue. Every soldier in the imperial army felt that victory was sure, for the captain was so self-possessed. If he had been hurrying to and fro, rushing here, there and everywhere, and making a great fuss about everything, they would have inferred that defeat was impending.*

*But see him yonder! All is well. He knows what he is doing. It is all right, for he does not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard. He is calm, for he can see that all is well.*

*There stands the Crucified this day, upon the vantage ground, at the right hand of God—and He surveys the battlefield in calm expectancy until His enemies are made His footstool. Tender towards the weakest of the weak and kind even to the unthankful and the evil, we may see in all this mercifulness the pledge of His success: Reread v. 4.... (then PRAY)*

PRAY: ...How great to know, Lord, that though we fail, You don't. Though we get discouraged, You don't....