

Jesu Juva

“Behold, the Servant!”

Text: Isaiah 42:1-9 (with First Passion Reading)

**Behold, my servant!** Isaiah begins his first Servant Song with those words - those words which are really what this season of Lent is all about. That we behold Jesus. That we fix our eyes on Him. That in the midst of our struggles, in the face of our sins, in the mire of our doubts and fears, *behold, your Saviour!* The servant of the Lord who has come to serve and to save you.

This saving is the work of the triune God for you. Isaiah's very first verse tonight spelled that out: there is the Father, the Servant, and the Spirit put upon the Servant. All working together. All in harmony. And when Jesus was baptized, this Word of God was fulfilled. For there, in the Jordan, the Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove, and the voice of the Father called out from heaven: *this is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased*. Or as Isaiah put it, the one *in whom my soul delights*.

But **the Father delights in you too**, and so sends His beloved to serve and to save you. To **bring forth** and **establish justice**. Three times that was said in this reading from Isaiah. Justice. Judgment. That's what this Servant will do. Which, actually, when you know you're a sinner, doesn't sound particularly good.

*Except* notice how the Servant will do His work. It's not what you might expect. He's not going to *shout and argue*, trying to be right by being the loudest guy in the room (like we do!). He's not going to **break a bruised reed**, nor **quench a faintly burning wick** - He's going to heal, not break; and give life, not put it out. He's going to **open the eyes of the blind** - and not just the physically blind, but the spiritually blind, the ignorant, and give us the eyes of faith. And He's going to **bring the prisoners from the dungeon** - literally, again, yes, but He will also rescue those who are powerless and locked in sin and death.

This is how the Servant will establish justice on the earth - not a judgment of condemnation, but in helping and raising and saving - and **He will not grow faint or be discouraged** until He does so. Because, Isaiah tells us, the God who created all things and gives breath and life to all people, is doing this. He is with the Servant. He is in the Servant. He is the Servant.

**Behold, my servant!** How good for us, then, to hear these words tonight. We who are often that *broken reed* - broken by the sin and harshness of this life and the condemnation of the world. We who are often that *faintly burning wick* - the fire of faith smothered by the pressures and fears of life. We who often *grow faint and discouraged*. We who perhaps even feel like we're in that *dungeon* of sin and death, in which there is no hope and from which there is no escape.

**Behold, my servant!** *Behold, you have a Saviour.*

That is Isaiah's message to Israel then and to us tonight. No matter how heavy and tough and hopeless life seems, no matter how weak and powerless and struggling you are, and no matter

how sinful and lost and ugly you may be, *behold, you have a Saviour!* You are loved. And you have hope.

***I am the Lord***, God said through Isaiah. *Three times* that name is in these verses, which is surely no accident. ***I am the Lord***. That was the name God first revealed to Moses in the burning bush, right before rescuing His people from their slavery in Egypt. That, therefore, is the name He proclaims here, in this promise that He will rescue all people from a slavery which is much worse than Egypt's - our slavery to sin, death, and hell.

And so, He says then at the end of this section, ***the former things have come to pass***. The first and old exodus is done. ***New things I now declare***. A new thing, a new exodus, by a new way . . .

And that's all Isaiah says for now! He'll explain more later, in the coming Servants Songs that we'll look at in the coming weeks. But for now, in these verses, he leaves it at that. A tantalizing teaser . . .

But we know the rest. We know how God would do this. And Isaiah does give us a hint as well, when God says of the Servant: ***I will give you as a covenant for the people***. That's an important word - covenant - and we heard it from the lips of Jesus in the Passion reading, when Jesus said: ***Drink of it, all of you; this is my blood of the new testament (or new covenant - same word), which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins***. Jesus is the new covenant. Jesus is the Servant. Jesus is the one who rescues us from sin, death, and hell. Jesus is the one who is our strength and hope and life. Jesus is the new thing who will accomplish the new thing in a new way: *the way of the cross*.

And so not with strength but in weakness, not with shouting but in silence, not with vengeance but with compassion, Jesus brings forth and establishes justice. On the cross He bears in Himself the justice and judgment of God against sin, that our life not be broken or quenched, but we be raised to life and given hope in the forgiveness of our sins.

And not only giving Himself for us, Jesus now also gives Himself to us. The Spirit given to Him in His baptism He now gives to us in our baptism. He is taken captive to free us captives, and the Body and Blood of the Servant on the cross is now the Body and Blood of the Servant on the altar, that what He gave for us He now gives to us. And eating and drinking the Body and Blood of our Passover Lamb, we pass over in Him from sin to righteousness, from death to life, from hell to heaven. A new exodus to live in even now. A new exodus that will be completed in the resurrection, when we enter the Promised Land of heaven.

That's what Isaiah wanted Israel to know. When Isaiah proclaimed these words, Israel was in a bad way, a way of rebellion and idolatry. But though they had turned from their God, their God had not turned from them. And the same message is for you tonight. The season of Lent is a season of repentance, recognizing our sin and rebellion, our idolatry and faithless, rebellious, lives. But God has not turned away from you. So no matter what you have done, no matter where you are, no matter how weak or powerless or a failure you feel, *behold! Look!* Something new. Something wonderful. A Saviour and His love *for you*.

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.