

“Here Is My Servant”

† endowed with the Spirit of hope (vv.1-4)

† taking hold of your hand (vv.5-7)

In the Name of God’s Servant, our Savior Jesus Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

Years ago I was visiting one of our members in a care facility. The waiting room had a devotional book entitled, *Servant Songs of Isaiah*. “Wonderful!” I thought. “Here people will be blessed from reading Isaiah’s comforting words about Jesus.” But the more I looked, the more disappointed I became. Whoever wrote the booklet intended it to be inspiring. But nowadays God’s comfort is lost because it’s all about human strength. Those devotions said very little about Jesus, even less about why He came. And if that were not enough, I was shocked to notice something else. There are four *Servant Songs of Isaiah* all about the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. I’m convinced of this by what I’ve been taught, but also by my own investigation. The life and ministry of Jesus perfectly fits all four *Servant Songs*, especially the last one. But guess which one was missing. I found our *Servant Song* for tonight from chapter 42, the one for next week from chapter 49, and the following week from chapter 50. But for all our meditations that follow – right through Good Friday and Easter – the main *Servant Song* in Isaiah 53 was not there. The writer was not convinced that it’s all about Jesus. We need to sit quietly at Jesus’ feet in these precious weeks of Lent and listen to the dear Holy Spirit inspire our hope by these words from the heavenly Father, written 700 year before Christ. Tonight He says, “**Here Is My Servant**” ...

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“*Here is my Servant, whom I uphold, my chosen One, the delight of my soul. I am putting my Spirit on Him. He will bring forth justice to the nations.*”² It’s amazing all by itself that God’s own Son would make Himself a *Servant*. Think of how many boys these days would just love to sit at home and play video games. As God’s eternal Son in heaven Jesus could be in those video games playing at the speed of light with all the heavenly angels. He could have taken on Satan and the demons in epic battles by His own divine power and crushed the enemy forces again and again. But Jesus laid all that power and glory aside to submitted to His heavenly Father’s will and be born of the virgin Mary.

At His Baptism and again at His Transfiguration God’s *Servant* heard those wonderful words of commendation from our Father in heaven: “*This is my Son whom I love. Listen to him.*” Here the Father says that Jesus delighted Him to the core of being. But we don’t realize how much Jesus needed to hear that. Because Jesus made Himself the *Servant* of the LORD, He took on a special mission no one else could. It would be His job to “*bring forth justice to the nations.*” This is much more than what passes for “social justice” these days. This is God’s *verdict* of “Not Guilty!” which Jesus was earning for us under God’s wrath. Jesus needed God’s Holy Spirit in His Baptism to fulfill God’s righteous plan.

Jesus could not be like the politicians today stumping in the streets and cyberspace for votes. He could not even “*cry out or shout or make his voice heard in the street.*” The mission of the LORD’s *Servant* was to satisfy God’s angry *justice* at every single sin – from Adam and Eve’s rebellion, through yours and my conception through our entire life in thought, word and deed. That video would have no good chapters, just open rebellion against God as we heard in tonight’s Lesson from Isaiah 59: “*Our offenses are many in your sight...rebellion and treachery against the LORD, turning our backs on our*

¹ Midweek Lenten Series: *God’s Servant + Our Savior* at New Life Evangelical Lutheran, Shoreview, Minnesota.

² Translation of this text is my review of Dr. John Brug’s draft translation for the Wartburg Project.

God, fomenting oppression and revolt, ...lies our hearts have conceived. So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter....The LORD ...was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm worked salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him. He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak. According to what they have done, so will he repay wrath to his enemies and retribution to his foes; he will repay the islands their due.” (Isaiah 59:12–18 NIV84)

God demanded that every sin be punished. **God’s Servant** came to make sure it was not on us. Jesus was **Endowed with the Spirit of hope** in God’s promises to make Him kind and gentle. When you feel broken down like piece of grass someone stepped on, when all your hope is flickering like a candle in the wind – just then the Lord’s **Servant** will cup His hands to protect the flame of your faith. He will lift you up and carry you when you are too weak to stand. *“A bent reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will not snuff out. He will faithfully bring forth justice”* to firm up your faith all by...

† taking hold of your hand (vv.5-7)

In the last century a Lutheran pastor lost his voice and could no longer preach. So he set about writing devotion books. His name was Herman Gockel. And one devotional, *My Hand in His*, first came into my hands through my mother. In fact, she had to keep ordering more copies because she kept giving hers away. The title of the book was from one of the devotions about a little boy walking to church on an icy sidewalk with his dad. He slipped and fell, so his dad picked him up and tried to hold onto his hand. “No, Daddy. I’m big. I’ll hold your hand.” Soon the little boy slipped again and down he went. This time as his father helped him up, he said, “Here, Daddy. You take my hand. I’m too small.”

In His State of Humiliation as a weak mortal, Jesus needed His heavenly Father’s strength. Jesus was always slipping away to pray. Luke’s Gospel account especially emphasizes Jesus was a man of prayer. He was constantly saying to His heavenly Father, “Take my hand. I need you.” Jesus was totally relying on these precious words of His Father recorded in the first *Servant Song of Isaiah*: *“I the LORD have called you in righteousness. I will take hold of your hand. I will guard you and I will give you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the nations.”* Jesus would soon have all our sins heaped on Him. But by His holy blood He would wash those sins away. And by His perfect life, Jesus would bring God’s **righteousness** down from earth to heaven to give us God’s peace and hope.

That’s why Jesus would *“not burn out,”* why He would *“not be broken until He establishe[d] justice on earth.”* Still today we are living in the *“coastlands”* that put their trust *“in His teaching.”*

All who have been baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have, according to God’s promise, receive the **righteousness that comes from God** and is received **by faith**. You and I have been made heirs by God of that New Covenant of pure grace in which God does everything. We’re too small to take hold of God. We can’t even get our hearts and heads around His promises. But **God’s Servant + Our Savior** lives in those precious promises. Jesus sends His Holy Spirit to take hold of us when we’re too weak. He has turned the lights on for us inside our souls.

Who do you know who needs Jesus? Who else needs to have God take hold of their hand? This same message that strengthened Jesus so that He could go through His suffering and death for us will strengthen everyone with whom you share it’s blessed hope. Without Jesus they are still suffering in a dark dungeon of sin and guilt. But the **Spirit of hope** is still eager through Jesus **God’s Servant + Our Savior** *“to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon, and those who sit in darkness from the prison house.”* How kind of Jesus to come and bring God’s grace to us. How kind of you to bring God’s grace to others. Open the prison. **“Here Is My Servant”** to deliver you. Amen.