

God's Servant Displays His Splendor

† earning God's reward (vv.1-4)

† bringing light for the Gentiles (vv.5-7)

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

During his college years at Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota, our son Joel Cordes did quite a bit of research for the Brown County Museum. He told me many fascinating things from his interviews on century farms that had been in the family of the farmer for over 100 years. One fact that really surprised me is this. Did you know that before the Great Depression you could get in a boat in New Ulm and go all the way to Sleepy Eye without getting out of the boat? Most of those rich farm fields were under water at the time. You still notice deep ditches along the road ways where the CCC workers channeled off the water to open up new farm land.

This is one reason why it did not surprise me to hear that in 1898, a Swedish farmer found what has come to be known as the Kensington Runestone, in the largely rural township of Solem, Douglas County, Minnesota.² Debate about its authenticity was finally settled in 2000. It's real. The inscription speaks of Viking explorers in the 14th century tying their ships to two rocky islands. They must have been able to sail this far inland and even to Oklahoma where another rune stone has been found.

Why mention all this? Because it helps show how very personal this second Servant Song of Isaiah is for us. God wants us to see how for us **God's Servant Displays His Splendor...**

† earning God's reward (vv.1-4)

*"Listen to me, you coastlands. Pay attention, you far away peoples!"*³ The NIV translates *coastlands* as *islands*. If America was mostly under water in 700 B.C., then we would now be living on those ancient *islands*. The Viking inscription spoke of *islands* where only fields and farmland are now. The LORD says in Isaiah's next chapter, *"By a mere rebuke I dry up the sea, I turn rivers into a desert..."* (Isaiah 50:2) *Listen...Pay attention*, for all this is for us.

Comparing these words with the life of Christ convinces me that Jesus is speaking here seven centuries before He was born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus is the eternal Son of God who says, *"The LORD called me from the womb. When I was inside my mother he had my name in mind."* Mary and Joseph were told to name their miraculous baby boy, *"Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."* (Matthew 1:21) *"For nothing is impossible with God."* (Luke 1:37) The Holy Spirit can even cause a young virgin to conceive the Son of God. What God the Father says to Jesus He also says to us: *"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine."* (Isaiah 43:1) It's wonderful to belong to God. We are adopted back into His family by Baptism!

Jesus, the Servant of the LORD continues: *"He made my mouth like a sharpened sword."* Remember the double edged sword from the mouth of Jesus in Revelation (1:16)? Jesus is the Word of God incarnate. God's Word *"is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."* (Hebrews 4:12 NIV84) *He hid me in the shadow of his hand.* God had to protect His Son from Herod's

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

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kensington_Runestone

³ This text is my review of Dr. John Brug's draft translation for the EHV (Evangelical Heritage Version, i.e. Wartburg Project).

soldiers right from the start. **He made me a polished arrow.** Improved arrow technology of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires could strike from a distance. Likewise, Jesus can carry out the will of God by the power of His Word. **He concealed me in his quiver.** During His lifetime Jesus looked like any ordinary human being; His glory was hidden. Yet he was always ready to do God's will like an arrow in **his quiver.** **He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my glory."**

That sounds glorious, doesn't it? But was Jesus' life a failure. It sure seemed that way to His disciples, especially to Judas. He along with Peter did not like Jesus' talk about suffering at the hands of the hated Roman authorities and even their own Jewish religious leaders. Apparently, Jesus also could sometimes feel down about how things looked to His human eyes. Did you hear that in His voice? But did you also notice where He put His hope? **"But I said, 'I have labored in vain. I spent my strength and got nothing at all.' Yet justice for me is safe with the LORD and my reward is with my God."** Jesus was always praying to His heavenly Father for strength. He kept looking past the cross to His resurrection. Then God's **splendor** would finally be visible and He ascend to God's glory everlasting.

But God wants us to know that His greatest **splendor** was to save us from our sins. We too look for **justice** in God's mercy. We know our verdict is **safe with the LORD** and our **reward is with our God.** We do not deserve rewards from God because of our sins, yet He wants to give us rewards of grace. The Bible says, **"God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them."** (Hebrews 6:10 NIV84)

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Often our problem with God is that we think too small. We fail to pray because we fear our problems might be too unimportant while He deals with storms and catastrophes. Or we forget He wants to give us the desires of our hearts. God assures us that He knows the number of hairs on our head and cares for us more than the birds of the air and the flowers of the field. And in really big things like forgiving sins and taking souls home to heaven, God the Father told His Son to think big too:

But now the LORD who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to turn Jacob back to him, so that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has been my strength—the LORD said, "It is too light a thing that you should just be my servant and only raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the ones I have guarded in Israel. I will appoint you to be a light for the nations so that my salvation may be known to the end of the earth."

King Solomon prayed for God's Word to come to us non-Jews, Gentiles, when he dedicated the temple in Jerusalem (1000 B.C.). It had always been on God's heart to reach out through His Jewish people to make His Messiah the Savior of all. After Jesus died and rose again, His Apostle Peter put this in his Pentecost sermon. His listeners were terrified to hear that after centuries of waiting they had crucified their own Messiah. They were cut to the heart and asked, **"What shall we do?"** **Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."** (Acts 2:38f) We rejoice in Christ's light today.

This is what the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, its Holy One, says to the one deeply despised, to one abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers: "Kings will see and stand up. Public officials will see, and they will bow down, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you." When Judgment Day dawns all the rulers of this earth will have to bow before God's Son. Queen Elizabeth of England reportedly said she wanted to be alive on Judgment Day so she could lay her crown at Jesus' feet. All who repent and trust God's mercy now will greet that day with joy because your sins are all forgiven. Love wants to warn the rest and help them get ready too as we continue **bringing light for the Gentiles. God's Servant Displays His Splendor,** and we worship Him with joy. Amen.