

God's Servant Sustains the Weary

✠ **He is determined.** (vv.4-7)

✠ **He is innocent.** (vv.8-9)

✠ **He is faithful.** (vv.10-11)

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

Maybe it's my background that makes me so amazed at these Servant Songs of Isaiah. Anyone coming from a broken home can see why I dearly love the God of the Bible. God's Word is so practical for real life. Tonight's text rescued my teenage heart from tears and deep depression. The Servant of the LORD has taught our family to live what our pastor preached at Cindy's and my wedding. Such a short, simple verse that answers practically every marriage problem I've seen for any other couple too. Ready? ***"Through love serve one another"*** (ESV), or, ***"Serve one another in love."*** (Galatians 5:13 NIV84) Christ-like service is the honey for a happy marriage and the sugar that binds any relationship. But by nature we are not wired to serve others, only our self. Christ-like ***agape-love*** is impossible for selfish sinners like us – unless God exposes our deepest problem and profound failures because of sin. Then He steps in to heal. Our Lord Jesus comes in grace and mercy not as an example to condemn us, but as **God's Servant** to help and heal us from sin and grief. He enables love with this: **God's Servant Sustains the Weary.**

✠ **He is determined.** (vv.4-7)

It's been barely a chapter since last Wednesday's text on the Second Servant Song. (Isaiah 49:1-7) But I counted at least a dozen references to *inheritance* and *children* and *marriage* as God shows the way to joy and peace in our relationship with Him and each other. You might feel alone and forgotten, so the LORD asks through Isaiah: ***"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands...."*** (49:15f NIV84) God keeps leading the sons and daughters of His people back home to His own loving heart. **God's Servant Sustains the Weary** because **He is so determined.**

This Word of God is dealing with divorce. Israel had committed spiritual adultery by worshiping idols. That's why the ten northern tribes of Israel had gone into Assyrian captivity. All the fortified cities of the land were destroyed. Crops are missing from about three years of the archaeological levels of that time. Little Judah was left with her capital city of Jerusalem while good King Hezekiah supported Isaiah keeping the hopes of God's people alive by his prophecies of law and gospel / sin and grace.

But gross immorality in the land was real. So was the LORD's obvious anger at sin. So just before our text the LORD speaks in divorce terms, asking about a ***"certificate of divorce"*** and why they wanted to go through with that? ***"Was my arm too short to ransom you. Do I lack the strength to rescue you?"*** the Lord asks like a loving husband pleading with his wife. ***"I dry up the sea, I turn rivers into desert...."***

Then in the next breath the **Servant of the LORD**, the Church's husband Jesus Christ speaks up. I love these words all by themselves: ***"The LORD God gave me a trained tongue, so I know how to assist the weary with a word. He wakes me up morning by morning. He awakens my ear so I listen like the learned."***² Without trials in your life could you know how true that is? Could you enjoy God's peace sitting quietly with Jesus ***morning by morning***, listening like Him to God's Word?

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

² The words of this sermon text are part of my draft review for a translation project. [M.C. 2/24/2016]

The cost was extreme. We usually suffer because we can't find any way to change the situation. Jesus suffered as the almighty Son of God, because He purposely chose to suffer as in our Passion History readings, summarized here: ***“The LORD God opened my ear, and I was not rebellious. I did not turn back. I gave my back to those who beat me, and my cheeks to those who pull out my beard. I did not hide my face from disgrace and spit.”*** (50:5f) What kind of determination, what kind of love could keep from turning away from that? How could He not give up in shame and sorrow at His own people?

It was His faith in God the Father that made **God's Servant** so **Determined** that to this day He still **Sustains the Weary**. ***“The LORD God will help me, so I will not be disgraced.”*** He was looking forward to the resurrection and trusting our Father in heaven through every bitter, bloody hour of His Passion. ***“Therefore I set my face like flint. I know I will not be put to shame.”*** God would be satisfied that Jesus' blood washed away the sins of all people of all time. All our guilt was heaped on His innocent head making Jesus the most evil, vile murderer, adulterer ever. Yet He was our Substitute, because....

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Satan tempted Jesus in order to accuse Him. His own religious leaders united to shame Him before the crowds. If only they could get Jesus to slip up once! Yet two trials before the Jewish high priests and two before the Gentiles, failed to find Jesus guilty of any crime – even though they used false witnesses to make up stories about Him. Little did they know they were fulfilling these Holy Scriptures:

“The one who acquits me is near! Who can accuse me? Let us take our stand. Who can pass judgment on me? Let him approach me. ⁹Look, the LORD God will help me. Who then can declare me guilty? Look, all of them will wear out like a garment. A moth will consume them.

No one knows the names of those false witnesses and members of the Sanhedrin anymore except God. Some here might remember Caiaphas and Annas the high priests, or King Herod and Pontius Pilate. They're all long gone, but Jesus lives on not only in memory, not only as the key to human history, but as the living Savior of the world. **God's Servant Sustains the Weary** to this day because God vindicated Jesus, declared Him “Not guilty!” by raising Him from the dead. In His weary suffering...

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Now some questions for you, dear friends, questions from **God's Servant**: ***“Who among you worships the LORD...?”*** “We're here tonight in worship,” you say. ***“Who among you...listens to the voice of his servant?”*** “I know how difficult it can be to listen attentively in an evening service. But our hearts hear even when our ears are drooping. Lord, open our ears and heal our hearts! ***“Anyone who walks in deep darkness and who has no bright light...”*** – maybe your eyes are getting dim from evening darkness or maybe you feel the darkness of sin and sadness on your soul. But then you are the very sinner the LORD is inviting here: ***“Trust in the name of the LORD, and...lean on [your] God.”*** Don't lean on your own intelligence or hard work. Don't try to rest your confidence on some decision you made for Christ. Don't try to make your love or your feelings for God the foundation of your faith. ***“Lean on [your] God”*** because **He is faithful**. You can see it in the innocence and determination of **God's Servant**.

But lest anyone take God's smile for granted as if this is a “take-it-or-leave-it” proposition, **God's faithful Servant** closes with a warning: ***“Watch out, all of you who are lighting fires to arm yourselves with flaming arrows.”*** That's how God describes spirituality in America today. Trying to be right with God without trusting in Jesus as your Savior is like trying to find your way through a dark forest in a windstorm with nothing but 4th of July sparklers to use for light and protection. ***“Go ahead,”*** God dares you. ***“Walk by the light of your fires and the flaming arrows you lit! But from my hand you will receive this: you will lie down in a place of torment.”***

Praise the LORD for His rescue! Praise Him for Lent. **God's Servant Sustains the Weary.** Amen.