

“Behold Our Righteous Servant!”

(Isaiah 53:10-12 – Pentecost 22 – October 20, 2024)

Isaiah 53:10-12 – ¹⁰*Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. ¹¹He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities. ¹²Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

Dear Redeemed in Jesus Christ:

Usually when a person serves, he expects some reward. When we are employed, we expect a regular paycheck. Can you imagine a person applying for the lowest, dirtiest, least appreciated job in a company and saying: “You don’t even need to pay me! My reward will be simply in getting the job done the right way, and seeing my service benefit this company. That’s all I want. I’m not here to serve myself; I’m here to serve you.” Such a job applicant would be totally unique, to say the least.

In our text, we are introduced to One whom God calls: “*My righteous Servant.*” But who would want to serve in His job description? Before He began His service, He knew it would be the lowest, dirtiest, and least appreciated task the world has ever seen. Yet it says: “*He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied*” (vs. 11). This righteous Servant did not come to serve Himself, but to serve us. His reward is simply in doing everything the right way and seeing His service benefit us.

So let us “**Behold Our Righteous Servant!**” as we ask: **1) Who is this Servant?** **2) What is His service?** and **3) What is His reward?**

1) Who is this Servant?

As we read through the book of Isaiah, we begin to hear of this righteous Servant in Isaiah 42:1-3 as God says: “*Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him. He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench.*” Do these words sound familiar? According to Matthew 12:17-20, this prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Truly, it describes the gentle nature of Him who came from His Father full of grace and truth (John 1:14). At Jesus’ Baptism, He was anointed by the Holy Spirit. He was

declared to be the Elect One, the delight of His Father, who spoke from heaven saying: *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”* (Matthew 3:17).

Again in Isaiah 49:1-6, we hear this righteous Servant speaking of His birth and purpose when He came into the world: *“The LORD has called Me from the womb; from the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name ... Indeed He says, ‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.’”* Again, this was fulfilled in Jesus. His miraculous conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary was announced by God’s angel (Luke 1:35). He was born, not only for the glory of Israel, but as a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the ends of the earth (Luke 2:32).

Behold, our righteous Servant! He is Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man, who came from His Father in heaven to serve us with His salvation!

2) What is His service?

But behold, what service He came to render for us! Employees might marvel if the owner of a corporation was seen doing the lowest, dirtiest, least appreciated job. For example, if he were to get down on his hands and knees and scrub the floors, clean the toilets, or some other menial task. But just consider the service of our Lord, who lowered Himself from His throne of glory in heaven, and humbled Himself, and came to us saying: *“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many”* (Mark 10:45).

Already, we begin to hear of His lowly service and humiliation in the prophecies leading up to our text. In Isaiah 50:6 we hear the righteous Servant saying: *“I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.”* As we come to our chapter in Isaiah 53:3, 7 we hear words like: *“He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.... He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter.”* Again, we see this fulfilled in Jesus’ arrest, trial, and crucifixion. For despite His innocence as the holy Lamb of God, His enemies judged Him guilty, rejected, and condemned Him to death.

Who of us would want to serve enemies who despise us and treat us this way? Don’t we often have a hard enough time serving those we love, when all too often we selfishly think of our own needs before theirs? Even in service where we receive wages, all too often we complain and become lazy. How much less would we be willing to serve enemies who hurt us, let alone plot to kill us, as they did Jesus?

Yet, in our text we see that His lowly service involves more. Not only would He suffer and die at the hands of men; He would suffer and die by the will of His Father. For it says: *“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief.”* This would happen, it says: *“When You make His soul an offering for sin”* (vs. 10).

Here we get to the heart of Jesus’ lowly service. God sent His Son into the world to serve in the lowest, dirtiest job of bearing all our sins to the cross. As God looked from heaven, He saw all the ways we have sinned and made ourselves unclean before Him in thought, word, and deed. At times, we feel the dirt and shame of our sins, when we know have acted in some outward immoral way that stained our character. But God sees far deeper to all the ways we have dirtied ourselves in our very heart and soul by hidden sins of hatred, lust, greed, dishonesty, jealousy, etc. This is why, even when we have been on our best behavior, Isaiah 64:6 says: *“But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.”*

But God did not want to treat us as our sins deserve and cast us away in our filth and shame forever. In His heart of mercy, He chose to lay all our sins on His Son instead. The innocent Son took all the sins of guilty sinners on Himself. As it says: *“He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many”* (vs. 12). On the cross, God *“made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us”* (2 Corinthians 5:21). In making His own Son a sin offering for us, it pleased God to bruise Him and put Him to grief, making Him suffer for our sin.

Yet even in His suffering, our righteous Servant thought only of those He came to serve. There on the cross, *“He made intercession for the transgressors”* (vs. 12). Jesus prayed for those who crucified Him; He prayed for us all: *“Father, forgive them”* (Luke 23:34). He poured out His heart in prayer for us, even as He poured out His blood to pay for our sins. As it says: *“He poured out His soul unto death”* (vs. 12). And when all our sins were paid for, He cried out: *“It is finished!”* (John 19:30).

Since Jesus has finished the lowly service His Father sent Him to do, all our sins are taken away. Because of Jesus’ sin offering, God forgives every way we have selfishly put ourselves first instead of serving Him and others. God forgives every way we have dirtied ourselves in thought, word, and deed. God is no longer counting any sin against us; for *“the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”* (1 John 1:7-9). God has baptized us and clothed us in the holiness of His own Son; He has lifted us up in the honor of His own children.

3) What is His reward?

Why did God's righteous Servant serve us in such a lowly way? What was His reward? It was simply the joy set before Him in doing everything the right way, fulfilling all righteousness for us, and seeing His service benefit us. It was for the joy of saving our souls for eternal life that He endured the cross (Hebrews 12:2).

Our text brings Jesus' finished work of salvation to us, as it says: *"When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied"* (vs. 10). After the suffering of His soul for our sins, Jesus is satisfied in His resurrection. He is satisfied to see us forgiven and living with Him! For we are His seed, His offspring, through faith.

This is what it means when it says: *"By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many"* (vs. 11). It is the knowledge of faith, given to us by the Gospel. It is the knowledge of faith worked in our heart by the Holy Spirit, by which we know Jesus as our Savior. By this faith, we benefit from all He did to serve us. Romans 5:1-2 says: *"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."*

This is the reward that satisfies our righteous Servant. He delights in justifying us before His Father. He delights in giving us forgiveness and peace with God in this life, and the hope of eternal glory in the life to come. Yes, it is His pleasure to give us all the riches of His Kingdom (Luke 22:29). As it says: *"Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong"* (vs. 12). Jesus lives to share His portion, the full inheritance of His heavenly Kingdom, with you and me and all who believe.

Behold our righteous Servant, Jesus Christ our Lord! He was willing to serve us in the lowest, dirtiest, least appreciated task the world has ever seen. He was willing to bear all our sins away and pour out His soul unto death for us. He was willing to give His all for us, so He could give His all to us. Simply put, Jesus' reward is you and me! It is because He loves us so much, that He delights in sharing the eternal life and joys He is preparing for us in His Father's heavenly Kingdom.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.