

Who is He Gonna Be, What's He Gonna Do? (Is 42:1ff) Zion 12.14.14

*1 "Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delights—I have put my Spirit on him. He will bring justice to the nations. 2 He will not shout, nor raise his voice, nor cause it to be heard in the street. 3 He won't break a bruised reed. He won't quench a dimly burning wick. He will faithfully bring justice. 4 He will not fail nor be discouraged, until he has set justice in the earth, and the islands will wait for his law."*

Most of you have children and maybe even grandchildren. Soon after they are born, as we look at them, helpless and pink and hungry—we begin to wonder who and what they will be. Will they be rich and famous? Will they discover some new medicine? Will they carry on the family name with honor and make their parents proud? Will they live to be old and gray? So many possibilities and no answers. Who will they be? What talents and abilities will God grant them? How will they use those abilities?

This is the third Sunday of Advent, so you could say that we are right in the middle of celebrating the Christmas season—the birth of Jesus of Nazareth.

Our Advent theme today is annunciation. There was actually more than one. One was when Mary found out that she was to be the mother of the Messiah—we looked at that last week. Can you imagine the anticipation and the wondering she and Joseph did as they waited to see what God was about to do—in their lives and in the lives of other Jews?

They could probably hardly contain themselves—especially considering all that they had seen and heard. They knew the child was special and that he had a special work ahead of him—but they still didn't know the details and I'm sure they wondered and wondered—just as you and I do when any child is born.

The annunciation continued in our advent readings for today as the shepherds heard the good news that Christ was born.

The Isaiah passage for today comes from the church calendar. The way the calendar works, just before the celebration of Christ's birth, we look at the anticipation of the second coming. Today we celebrate the annunciation and by the end of December, we will have looked at his birth and have celebrated the miracle of the incarnation of God.

During this season, we celebrate the reason the angels called him Immanuel, God with us. Here we have almighty God, born of a woman and in need of all the things that any baby needs—with potential and possibilities far beyond any his earthly parents could imagine.

Our passage from Isaiah answers the question for Joseph and Mary—it answers the song, "What Child is This?" The prophecy we look at today tells us who we serve—who the savior really is. So, as we anticipate our celebration of Christmas and the birth of the child and as we think of him lying in a manger—we look to Isaiah to tell us how wonderful a savior he really is.

This was a short passage, so let's read it again and look at what it means—what it might mean for us.

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The first thing this passage tells us is in verse 1--Jesus is God's servant. You know what a servant does, don't you? He serves. Who does he serve? (His master, the one in charge) What does he do as he serves? (The will of his master) So, we see that this baby in a manger is a servant, but not of a human master—a servant to God the Father. He is one who does the bidding of God the Father.

The next thing this passage tells us about the baby is that he is God's elect and that God himself holds him up—as he serves and as he ministers on earth, God will hold him up with his power. You and I can potentially elect the wrong person, but God can't and God didn't. His holy Son serves God because God chose him to serve.

This also seems to mean that God honors him—and holds his name up high. Also, he is held up as an example—you and I have failed, but it is possible to live in the flesh without failing. Therefore, in our sin, we are guilty of breaking the law and are guilty of the blood of the Savior.

The Son of God was elected—chosen to do the bidding of God in the work of salvation. He was chosen and he chose to answer the call. The Father chose, but he gave of himself freely.

We also see that God is pleased. So as Mary and Joseph sit around the fire—on the way to Bethlehem and talk about their son-to-be—Isaiah would tell them that their son will be pleasing to God and he will be filled with God's spirit.

Let me go aside a bit here. Truthfully, theology is not always set in proverbial stone. When it comes to the details, we don't all understand the word of God in the same way.

That said, I'll not ask you to believe exactly as I do, but I believe that as the Christ came to be born and live on this earth—that although he was still fully God, he divested himself of his God-ness or his divine powers. Personally, I believe he lived a perfect life in his human-ness without using his God-power to accomplish it. If we look at this verse and understand that Jesus of Nazareth—the human—was filled totally and completely with the Holy Spirit, we can account for his perfection and even for his miracles.

There is a comfort in this for me, but also conviction. Being filled with the Holy Spirit—to the very brim (as Jesus was)—brings unbelievable power. Power to resist temptation. Power to live a Godly life. Power to do miraculous things under the leadership and with the power of the Holy Spirit (as some of the disciples did.)

That is the good side of that “Spirit-filled” possibility. The bad side is that I have never given up self enough to take real advantage of that in-filling—and neither have any of you.

The last of that verse tells us that he will bring the law and the Good News both to the gentiles. He will fulfill God’s promise to Abraham by using his seed to bring God to all the people of the earth. You and I are not the genetic seed, but the spiritual seed of Abraham.

We see in the next verse that he will not come with a shout and with loud declarations.

Guess not—after all, we know that he was born in the most humble of places. He, the king of all will come quietly and meekly.

Verse 3 tells us—and Joseph and Mary that their child would come to tend to the weak and to lift up the humble and the hurting. The Jews of the time thought that the Savior would come and hold up those who were self-righteous and sure of themselves. They thought that the Messiah would hold up the Pharisees and the proud and the learned and the rich.

This verse says otherwise. For me, it is a comfort to know that the Son of God came to lift up the weak and the downtrodden and to bring down the proud. But notice also that once the proud have been humbled—they too are in a position to be lifted up by the Son of God.

Those of us who are struggling with the light and with the truths of God—those of us whose wicks of light may be flickering and smoldering—he did not come to put us out, but to trim us and add new oil and light our fire, if we allow it.

We see also in that prophesy that he would accomplish his work—and not be crushed until he has brought salvation to the entire world. That is the way it happened. He has set right that which has been wrong since Adam and Eve first broke the ONE RULE God gave them.

He has made a clear way back to God, through his perfection. It says in Isaiah that even we gentiles will seek out his Word and his work—and that prediction is true. Though the Jews thought he would be a savior for them and for them alone—he came as a savior for all who would call on him.

As we go to verse 6 we see that God called him in righteousness and that God, through his Spirit, would keep that child on the path and hold him in his hand long enough for him to do his work. God himself would assist and guide that small baby and show him the way to Jerusalem and to Calvary and to resurrection and glory.

This was to be done to fulfill that promise to Abraham and so that all human beings might have an opportunity to come for salvation and to come and serve him.

He would open blind eyes and he would spring the doors of the prisons.

This is a physical prediction and a spiritual one also. It is a wonderful thing that Jesus came and did miracles—that he made the blind to see and the lame to walk—it is a greater thing that he came and

opened our spiritual eyes and set us free from a spiritual prison and from eternal darkness—able to walk in his path and in his way.

All this has happened and is happening, we are told in verses 8 and 9—because God himself declared it and saw it come to pass even before Isaiah wrote it down.

The promise of a little baby lying in a manger—yet so much more. In all their anticipation, Mary and Joseph probably couldn't imagine who he would be and what he would do.

But we can see it from this side. I hold up to you this morning a Savior beyond Savors—a Lord beyond measure. One who seeks to make the weak strong and bring down the haughty—only to raise them up. Through his work, made possible by the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit—he has brought the Good News of God's love to us gentiles.

What are YOU going to do with this baby, this promise—this Savior—on this day? At this time of commitment?

If you haven't, are you going to accept him as Lord and Savior?

If we are already a Christian, are we going to REALLY let him have first place in our lives? Maybe we did at one time, but we have scooted him over and we are sitting on the throne of our own heart. That isn't where we belong, is it?

LORD and savior.

Maybe you are ready to go to work for the Kingdom of God in a way you never have. Zion is the perfect place to begin your journey.

By profession of faith.

By re-dedication to Christ the Lord.

By joining with us as we seek to serve him.

As we sing.