

GOD'S JUST SERVANT

Lesson Scripture: Isaiah 42

Focus Scripture: Isaiah 42:1-9

Key Verse: Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. Isaiah 42:1 (NRSV)

ISAIAH 42:1-9 (NRSV)

1 Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.

2 He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street;

3 a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.

4 He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

5 Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it:

6 I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations,

7 to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

8 I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols.

9 See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them.

ISAIAH 42:1-9 (KJV)

1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

2 He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

3 A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

4 He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

5 Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:

6 I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

8 I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

9 Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.

INTRODUCTION

As believers we love to see justice in our societies. Naturally, we desire to see and support leaders who promote justice, and take steps to punish and stop acts of injustice. But, as we saw in previous lessons, this was not the case among the Israelites in the times addressed by Micah and Isaiah. In that era, injustice was prominent. The poor and the oppressed people would have wondered daily when injustice would die. Their hearts longed for times of peace, justice, and fair play.

This is where this lesson starts. God obviously saw what was happening and was not happy. God had a plan to address the situation.

As we saw before, God set appointed times for events to unfold. Therefore, God used the prophet Isaiah to share the plan with the suffering people. From that angle, see the **Lesson Scripture** as God's call to enduring hope. In essence, Isaiah told people not to lose hope. The justice they desired would come. And although those days were set in the

future, the people could be assured that justice would prevail. So, whatever else you see in this lesson, see it as a lesson of giving hope to people who desperately needed hope. As you work through the lesson, consider the importance of hope to people in desperate situations.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Read this section with the **Introduction's** comments in mind. Against the background of injustice, God promised God's people a just servant. Unlike the corrupt leaders of that day, this servant would bring true justice. He would not be sidetracked from or forced off his mission to establish justice. The servant's rule would

shine throughout the whole earth (verses 1-4). His mission would be to bring spiritual freedom and insight to all people (verse 7).

Then God gave the people a reason to believe in this vision. It was coming from someone in whom they believed, from God the almighty creator. This is the same God who made heaven, the earth,



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and humankind (verse 5). The message came from the same God who had proven worthy of their praises and honor (verse 8). So on the basis of that authority, the prophet made a call for justice and noted how God would bless the people if they would commit to a path of right living (verse 7).

In verse 9, God reinforced the vision of hope. The people had to understand that what had happened in the past and was happening at that time would eventually pass. The injustice would not last forever. Also, in this verse we see one of the distinguishing features of godly prophecies. It is revealed way in advance. Therefore, when it is fulfilled people know it had to come from a divine source.

One thing believers can say about God is that God keeps God's promises. In Isaiah 42, we have the promise, and in the New Testament we see its fulfillment. Indeed, Palm Sunday is the day we formally celebrate that fulfillment. Without doubt we know that Jesus Christ is the servant promised in Isaiah 42.



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SANKOFA

For persons living in cozy western countries, it is easy to underestimate the power of hope in the lives of people. To understand the importance of hope, sometimes we need to listen to people who survived extreme hardships only because of the hope they had. The people of Liberia, Africa gave us good examples of that. They showed that African people are strong people who can endure anything as long as they have hope.

In *The Sayon Town Journal* (February 14, 2017) we saw some of these persons. The report highlighted how hope kept some ordinary people like Haynes Lewis and Nora Tabab going. They had endured one of the most brutal civil wars of modern times. It lasted fourteen years and when it ended in 2003, almost a quarter of a million persons had died. During that time, people had lives of misery. They had no running water, no electricity, no streetlights, no schools. The infrastructure (roads and utilities) was in ruins. The rich people had fled

the country. People had to find a living however they could.

What's more, thirteen years after the war had ended, people were still struggling to find a life of normalcy. Lewis and Tabab shared how they lived through 26 years without electricity. But they had hope. The day after some electricity was restored, Mr. Lewis rushed out to buy a TV, a fan, and an electric bulb. He spent almost a quarter of a year's income. This was money he had saved in the hope electricity would come back some day. Ms. Tabab had a similar story of living in hope. This is the same type of hope Isaiah's message of the coming Messiah must have awakened in the people. If you appreciate that, you will appreciate why God sent the message.

CASE STUDY

Do we have parallels of the power of hope in American history? Sure we do! Probably the most popular stories are in the era of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement. What immediately jumps out at us is the "I Have

a Dream" speech. Dr. King, as Isaiah did centuries before, cast a futuristic vision. He looked beyond the racism, the high unemployment and underemployment of his people, to a day when there would be equality and justice. We can note that this is the same vision the framers of the American Constitution saw: a society in which freedom and justice were alive and seen daily. The framers did not want a society like England with a privileged few lordling over lower classes.

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Because of the injustices in America at that time, the 1950s were troubled years. Despite a Supreme Court ruling (Brown vs. Board of Education), some privileged people were determined to keep the status quo of injustice. But activists like Dr. King would have none of it. So the pushback came. What kept activists and their supporters going? Hope! In the "I Have a Dream" speech, we see parts of the vision of hope. Dr. King saw an America where his people were on "a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of

material prosperity.” But Dr. King flatly refused to accept that the “bank of justice is bankrupt.” Instead he cast the vision of an American society that had moved from a “dark desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice.” He saw a day when his people would enjoy “the riches of freedom and the security of justice.” And what did that vision do? It fueled a movement that forced landmark social laws like the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1995, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. That is the power of a powerful, positive vision. That is what God gave to the suffering people of Isaiah’s day: a vision of justice that helped them to endure injustices. Today, as in Isaiah’s day, we need such a vision to get us through these troubling times.

LIFE APPLICATION

This lesson asks us to do some serious reflection of our view of Jesus Christ. Isaiah gave a clear description of the character and mission of the servant who would be the eternal icon of justice. Passages like Matthew 12:1-21 and

Luke 4:17-21 confirm that Jesus Christ is that servant of justice. Therefore, each person must consider the extent to which he or she sees Jesus Christ as the stream from which justice flows to us. If we accept this, then we know how we should view any injustice we see around us. Believers walk in the assurance that any injustice will last for a limited time only. If we accept this view, let us look at how

it motivates us to get involved in reasonable calls for justice. On the other hand, if we hold alternate views, let us examine those views and how they fashion our responses to the injustices in our society.

Following from that first assessment, consider how God may deal with injustices in your society. In the **Lesson Scripture**,

God, through the Holy Spirit, worked through Isaiah to call out injustice and give the people hope. How do you think God works today when the Holy Spirit is available to all believers? Then, personalize the question. To what extent are you open to being a modern day “Isaiah” for God? Something to seriously



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think about! Remember, God does not always call the ‘qualified’ but qualifies those God calls. You may want to make this a point of prayer and meditation.

Finally, consider your preparedness to pay a price for justice. In the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, the activists paid high prices. Some were beaten, made to face vicious dogs, had their homes torched, and otherwise victimized. Yet the movement continued. Why? Because the people were prepared to pay the price to see justice in society. Today, we enjoy the fruits of that courage and determination. We are proud of them. We call them heroes. Note that leaders like Dr. King were supported by thousands of ordinary people. They made the difference through protests. Consider what future generations will say about

our desire for justice and our resolve to fight for it.

QUESTIONS

1. What is your response to the statement, “God loves poor people and hates rich people?”
2. What is your response to the statement, “Prayer can push God to speed up his solutions to a crisis?”
3. How do you know when God wants you to be part of a solution to injustice?

CLOSING DEVOTION

Prayer: Dear Father, the source of all true justice, open my eyes and heart to your messages about social and economic justice. And give me the strength and wisdom to play my role in addressing injustices around me. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

March 30–April 5

Monday	Hebrews 11:29-35 (Faith Heroes Acted Justly)
Tuesday	Matthew 21:1-11 (Your King Comes Humbly)
Wednesday	Mark 11:15-19 (House of Prayer for All Nations)
Thursday	Luke 11:42-44 (Neglect Justice at Your Peril)
Friday	Matthew 12:15-21 (Jesus, God’s Servant Messiah)
Saturday	Isaiah 42:10-17 (God Will Not Forsake the People)
Sunday	Isaiah 42:1-9 (God’s Servant to Establish Justice Everywhere)