

The Servant of the Lord

By Ken Wimer

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Bible Text: Isaiah 52:13-15

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Shreveport Grace Church

2970 Baird Road
Shreveport, LA 71118

Website: www.shrevegrace.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/shreveportgracech

Here in Isaiah 52:13-15, the Lord directs Isaiah to write,

13 Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. 14 As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: 15 So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

There are those in religion today who like to refer to themselves as being the Lord's servants. You'll run into some in this day and age, both men and women. When you ask them what they do, "Well, I'm the Lord's servant." They speak of it often as a reason that others should hear them or pay them respect or in some way follow them, but such an idea typically goes against what a servant is. A servant is humble. A servant is there to serve their master and, in most cases, is to be seen and not heard. The idea of a servant, using that as a self-aggrandizing title is foreign to the Scriptures. These are terms of humility and I would say even the word "pastor" is kind of thrown around like an entitlement today but when you stop and think of what a pastor is, it's an under-shepherd. He's an under-shepherd. How many people do you know of today that are boasting of being under-shepherds? In other words, out in the field with some sheep? It is a business that does not have a lot of respect in men's eyes today. Yet this is a title which our Lord took himself and one of great glory for him. When you stop and think that he, being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but condescended to become a man and to take on himself the form of a servant," is the way it's written there in Philippians 2, "and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." So if such was the mind of our Lord, and it was, how could any who serve him or follow him think of themselves more highly than they ought to think?

In Luke 17:10, and this is so different than what we're used to seeing among religious leaders today dressed up in their robes, regal robes and every denomination has a different way of dressing them up, but you can always tell one when you see one. It's like a friend of mine said at one point: they are men, but they are dressed like women and they expect people to call them "Father," and they can't have any children. It's just something that has been developed over the years.

But here in Luke 17:10, begin up in verse 8, speaking of servants, "And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." That's all. You know, I think about that even the privilege of standing here and opening my mouth to declare the glories of Christ to you. As much as you express appreciation for me, I still have to say what our Lord has said here, "I am but an unprofitable servant and I have done that which was my duty to do." I dare not do anything else but point you to Christ.

Over in Matthew 10:24, again, this is how the Scriptures portray a true servant. Their one purpose is to glorify their master and certainly if in Isaiah 52:13, Isaiah is instructed to write, "Behold, my servant," he's certainly not speaking of himself. The eyes and the intention are not on the servant but on the master. In our case, Christ is our Master. In Christ's case, as God's servant, the Father was his Master and he the bond servant. He came to satisfy his Father on behalf of his people.

But here in verse 24 of Matthew 10, our Lord said, "The disciple is not above his master." It's like John the Baptist preached, "He must increase, I must decrease." It would be better for us to leave here today with our minds and hearts filled with Christ and not Ken. That's so vital. He is the Master.

"The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" Don't be surprised when because of this distinctive, solitary, exclusive message concerning Christ, that your friends, acquaintances, associates are offended and they take exception with you. They did with our Lord. Don't try to get out from under it. Don't water down what it is the Lord has taught you and that you know and believe. Stand true as a servant should.

So coming back here to Isaiah 52, having said those few words about what a servant is and does, in this text, God calls attention to his servant. He's the only one that matters, really. The one that all other true servants minister to and for or else they must most certainly be called evil or unjust servants. Anyone who pretends to be a servant of the Lord that does not serve Christ's interests and his glory and declare his attributes, is a false servant. He does not serve the Master.

But here, first of all, we see the identity of God's servant. In verse 13 of Isaiah 52, "Behold, my servant." My servant. This is God speaking and when he says, "Behold," it's in a way to catch our attention otherwise we would read right on by. To me, it's indicating, "Don't look among men for this servant but look to me. Behold, my servant." Now, this servant has already been identified in previous portions of Scripture as being Christ. If you recall back here in Isaiah 42:1, the same wording, phrasing, was used. Isaiah 42:1, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold," so, again, this is the Father speaking

here, "mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." Very clear indications here, especially when we consider the New Testament of whom this is speaking. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," is the way the voice from heaven declared Christ when he was upon earth. He says, "I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the nations. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street," as you would expect of a politician, that's the idea here. He is not gathering people around him to rally them for an election. The election is already over. God did the electing. There are people today that like to think themselves smart and they portray Christ as still out there looking for people to chose him. Well, you know, he's not asking for that. God said, "I have already set my King on my holy hill." This is not an election among men. The election was of God when he said, "Mine elect in whom my soul delighteth." So he's not out there trying to raise a vote among men.

Verse 3, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth." The very thing that men would consider as insignificant, he considers. That blind Bartimaeus that men had already relegated a life of condemnation, the Lord stopped and called to himself. That Zacchaeus that was the subject of men's disdain, he called down from the tree. That thief on the cross that was there nailed next to our Lord and men had condemned, our Lord said, "Today you will be with me in paradise." The Scriptures are full of examples of a bruised reed that he would not break. There are many a seemingly strong reed that the Lord will break. There is many a seemingly strong wick that is burning and yet no oil, that the Lord will extinguish, but not any of his own.

It says, "he shall bring forth judgment unto truth." He will save them in a manner that is in accord with his truth and his righteousness. Mercy is never shown at the expense of judgment or of truth or righteousness.

It says there in verse 4, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law." That's talking about that obedience that he worked out; that righteousness that he worked out on behalf of his Father for those sinners that he came to save.

So what we have here in Isaiah 52 is speaking of the same servant in verse 13, "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently." One commentator said this about this verse, "Here properly a new chapter should begin." It's like I introduced it. "These three last verses treated of the same person and subject as the following chapter," that we're going to see in Isaiah 53, "even of Christ. His person, his offices, his humiliation, his exaltation and the effects and truths of his work for of him undoubtedly the whole is to be understood."

So, again, we see that Christ is the very subject of these Scriptures. Christ as a servant here is being described as a man. His coming as a man, as the mediator, being God's servant to work out that salvation which left up to us, none of us could ever work out and just like a servant who performs a work and receives his wages. Every servant is worthy of his hire, worthy of his wages. The wages of our Lord as God's servant in coming and working out this salvation is that he is going to have every one for whom he died. There

is not going to be one lost. There is not going to be one in hell when this is all said and done for whom the Lord Jesus Christ died. So you can see the whole theme here is to show how this servant came and lay that foundation of salvation, worked out the redemption and salvation of his people. Did it willingly. Did it cheerfully, diligently, faithfully, all of those different terms that could be applied to the work of our Lord. But that's who's identified here as the servant.

A second thing I would have you to see in Isaiah 52:13 and 14 are the qualities and characteristics of Christ as God's servant. Here it says, "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently," wisely. Doesn't that characterize our Lord, that he is the very wisdom of God? And whenever God is pleased to reveal Christ in a heart, we see in him our wisdom and our righteousness and our sanctification and our redemption, that all the glory belong unto him.

We can see this wisdom in Christ even from his infancy. If you look over in Luke 2:41-52, if we were taught Bible stories growing up, we probably remember this one pretty well: the boy Jesus in the temple was usually how we studied it. Yet there is a message here, I believe, that shows that even as a child, the Lord understood something of his mission. There was that wisdom that was manifest in the reason he was here on earth and that his earthly parents, in parenthesis, it's like any children, they're borrowed. They're not ours. We don't get the glory. Children are a heritage of the Lord and even Mary and Joseph had to be reminded whose child he was. This was God's Son.

We read, "Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem." Now, if that were one of our children, the tarrying behind would be an act of rebellion but this is God's Son, the tarrying behind was an act of wisdom. There was a reason he tarried behind even at 12 years of age.

"And Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers." So here is wisdom personified, that at the age of 12, already he was asking questions of them pertaining to that which they considered themselves to be masters and doctors of the law, not realizing that this young child that was before them was actually the author of that law. "Before Abraham was," he said, "I am." We call it the law of Moses but Christ was the giver of the law. He was the giver; he was the subject of it; he was the one that the law pointed to.

Here, "they were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." You can understand three days not knowing where your child is.

"And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Right there he declared in wisdom why it was he was upon this earth. It wasn't to serve them or satisfy them but to be about his true Father's business. Here in Isaiah 52:13, the Lord said, "Behold, my servant," even at the age of 12, he was aware and knew what his purpose was, his mission was.

Verse 50 says, "And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them," he had to be obedient in every aspect of the law. "Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right," and yet all the while, he was to be about, even in that, his Father's business.

"But his mother kept all these sayings in her heart." And it says there in verse 52, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." He was God and yet he was man. Just as any child grows and matures in wisdom, so our Lord did. He didn't come down from heaven floating down as a perfect man. He was born by conception, came out of the womb, grew as a child, grew in wisdom as a man and stature and yet in all of that, it was for one purpose and that was to serve the interest of his Father to work out a righteousness, work out a salvation on behalf of his people.

Certainly throughout the whole of his public life, we can see how this was accomplished when it says, "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently." The Lord told his disciples that he was sending them as sheep among the wolves and he gave them the instruction to be wise as serpents but gentle as doves. Wisdom that he gives us is because he is the source of all wisdom and we can see that wisdom not only in his public life and preaching the Gospel, but also in answering the questions of his enemies and his behavior in every way to such a degree, even in his arraignment and his condemnation before men and his crucifixion that in nothing he in any way erred in word or deed, and here is the amazing thing, or thought, because his being obedient unto death required even his fulfilling the spirit of the law. So when the Lord said, "Love your enemies," he had to fulfill that even in how he dealt with his enemies. Such is the wisdom, I believe, that the Lord gives his own for whom he died. The Spirit is called the Spirit of wisdom, but it comes from Christ. It comes from the fruit of what he has accomplished is the fruit of righteousness. It's not what you do that is called the fruit of righteousness, but what he has done.

Here it says that he would deal prudently so those are his qualities. It took wisdom, a wisdom beyond man's wisdom for the Lord Jesus Christ to work out this salvation to the honor and glory of God. That's where we come back here to Isaiah 52:13 and see the glory due to Christ as God's servant. It says here based upon who he is in verse 13, "he shall be exalted and extolled and be very high." Now, Bob, this is where I wanted you to read in Philippians 2, so we'll turn there. Philippians 2. I knew we'd get it eventually. You can see in verse 5 where we read, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Now, here it is, "Wherefore

God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

That right there is God's commentary on what was revealed to Isaiah here in Isaiah 52:13. "He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high." All of those referring to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and upon completion of that work, he had to finish the work. A servant is not commended who does not finish the work or doesn't do it right and so here in Scripture, the foretelling that not only would Christ be God's servant to work out salvation but that he would be faithful to the end in doing it to such a degree that the Father, whom he serves, would exalt him, extol him and make his name very high, by placing him at his own right hand and giving him all power in heaven and earth as a result of that work.

We see that over in Ephesians 1 and it tells us when this happened. When was this servant exalted? When was he extolled? And when was he made very high? Given that name above every name? Here in Ephesians 1:20 it says, "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." If Christ came to be the substitute and the sacrifice for sinners and laid down his life, what's the proof that he did a good work? That he finished it? That the Father then should extol him and exalt him and give him a name above every name? Well, when he raised him from the dead. That resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is vital in this work of redemption as his dying. They go together. You can't have one without the other. The fact that God raised him from the dead is proof to us that God accepted that work that he accomplished and that he is that faithful servant.

Not only raised him, it says in verse 20, but "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." To set one at their right hand is a place of honor, a place of glory, and all of this was done upon completion of Christ's work to such an extent that the Scriptures say that we for whom Christ died are seated in the heavenlies with him. It's like that high priest of old that went into the Holiest of Holies with that blood sacrifice and came out and blessed the people. He had the names of the people written upon his breastplate. They didn't physically go in themselves and come out, but they did in their representative. I've never seen the heavenlies. I've never seen what the Scriptures talk about but Scripture speaks in a way that I'm already there if I'm in Christ and seated with him. The idea of being seated at the right hand of the Father means the work is complete. It is finished. It's a place of honor, but it's also a place of completed work.

When it says that he is extolled, that word means to be lifted up. Christ said, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto myself." He's talking about being lifted up upon the cross and drawing all those that the Father gave him, not losing one, but as a result, being lifted up on high now.

Extolled and as it says there, "and be very high." God the Father has made him very high, higher than the kings of the earth. Higher than the angels of heaven. Higher than the heavens of heavens themselves because that's the glory due his name.

So we can see those qualities and what it is exactly that he accomplished, but in verse 14, we see the humiliation of Christ as God's servant. It says there, "As many were astonished at thee." You stop and think about even what you profess, you and I today. We're professing that all of our hope of salvation is built upon a man who was born over there in Israel and lived a life on this earth and died a horrible death. We're talking about a death by execution.

I remember one of my earliest memories of an execution was a guy by the name of, I think his name was Gary Gilmore. It's been a long time but shot back in the 70s. They killed him, shot him with a gun, that's how he wanted to die. Back then that's how they executed. But I bring that up so that you can get an idea of just how scandalous it would be for a natural minded Jew to be told that this one who died this sort of death and even the Scriptures say, "Cursed is every man that hangs on a tree," that this is the death that this man died and you're saying that your salvation was accomplished in that death? Can you see how strange it sounds to those who are outside? It's foreign. It's just unbelievable. And I would say the only reason I believe it and not just believe it but rest in it and hope in this one who came and accomplished it, is because it pleased the Lord to reveal this one in me. That's it. That's it, otherwise we would be right there with that crowd crying, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

We would be the first who would want to take up stones to stone him and that's the sense here in verse 14, "As many were astonished at thee." That's something that's unbelievable. "His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." That's talking about them having taken and literally plucked out his beard. These pictures that artists have painted down through the centuries of kind of a pristine Savior hanging on the cross, kind of swooning, but there is something about the way they paint it to still make it look like he was untouched, his form to Scripture.

A man whose visage was so marred more than any man, swollen beyond recognition. I know we speak often of the spiritual sufferings of our Lord but he suffered physically. There's a physical aspect to sin that he bore, that he had to suffer without being a sinner and all of that is described here as what our Lord endured for the salvation of his people. Think about what it was for him being infinite, God, to be made a man and not only to live his life on earth as a man, but to suffer and die. Scriptures have a lot to say about our Lord's suffering and that's what's depicted here. The scourgings, the buffetings that he endured to the point where it says no man's face has ever been marred as his was and his form more than the sons of men. That describes here a sacrifice and an offering that was beyond anything comparable to what men would know and yet that was the path that was his to take and him knowing it. He didn't go to the cross in surprise. He set his face like a flint toward Jerusalem, knowing the sufferings that he would endure and yet he did it as the faithful servant.

Then the final thing I'd bring out there in verse 15, the fruitful effects of his work as God's servant. It says there, "So shall he sprinkle many nations." Sprinkle many nations. This isn't to be understood of water baptism like you see some of these going around with

little hyssop and sprinkling people with water. The sprinkling that is here described, I believe, is what he accomplished in his death. If you look over in Hebrews 9:13, this was why he came. If he had come and just lived a perfect life and ascended, there would be no salvation. All it would have shown was that he was a faithful servant in life. But the wages of sin is death and death, the shedding of blood unto death and in his death there is a sprinkling of that blood as we read here in Hebrews 9, beginning with verse 12, "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

I don't believe like some preachers say that every time a person believes, the Spirit is taking and sprinkling that blood on that heart and that mind. That's not the picture here. The idea is a once for all act. "So shall he sprinkle many nations." That blood which he shed would be for the sin of sinners from many nations and as we get into the New Testament, we understand that to mean sinners from every tribe, nation and tongue. He has a representative people from every tribe, nation and tongue for whom that blood was shed and that blood sprinkled. Where was the blood sprinkled? Well, upon the altar. It was sprinkled before God. It was shed and covered the altar before God. God was satisfied on behalf of what he accomplished and so it is that when the Spirit now comes and reveals Christ in the heart of a sinner, they are made to see that it was in that once for all death that Christ accomplished that sin was put away and righteousness was imputed.

It says there, "for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider." It talks there about the kings shutting their mouths at him. You think about Pilate whose mouth was stopped. You think about Herod. These are all earthly kings, but I think about it in terms of spiritually. He has made of us a kingdom of priests and those that he has made to be a kingdom of priests, in other words his people, when they are caused to see him, certainly their mouths are shut. In other words, there is no more looking to ourselves. There is no more speaking of ourselves with any kind of glory, but anything that is said is said to his honor and glory alone. "And that which they had not heard shall they consider."

Why is Christ important to you? Why is he significant? I trust it's more than that. Why is he all? Well, it will be because the Spirit of God has taught you so, otherwise we'd be just like anybody else out there and such is his glory as the servant of the Lord. I pray that he gives us hearts truly to glorify him just as we see him here in this word.