

## **Christ, A Gentle Savior**

Call to Worship: Psalm 110

1st Scripture: Isaiah 42:1-9

2nd Scripture: Matthew 12:9-21

### **Introduction**

Last time, we considered a second event where the Pharisees had attempted to accuse the Lord of violating the Sabbath Day, when He had healed a man who had a withered hand. The Lord had refuted them, teaching that it is indeed lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Rather than humble themselves and repent of their heartless schemes, they then plotted together to seek out a means of killing the Lord. This morning, we continue on, seeing how our Lord then responds to what He knows the Pharisees are planning to do. And once again, Matthew utilizes Old Testament prophecy to reveal something profoundly glorious about the Lord's heart, while seeking to explain why He sought to maintain a low profile throughout the course of His ministry.

### **I. The Context**

“But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all” (vs. 15). We are not told about how Jesus knew of the wicked plans of the Pharisees, who were conspiring to kill Him. It may be that He knew their hearts, as He had at other times, or it may be that an insider had leaked the information out. Whatever the case, knowing of their plans, the Lord had retreated at this time. And He did so, because it wasn't His time to be glorified. More work had to be done before He would ultimately deliver Himself over to be betrayed and then crucified. We might for the moment, simply note, that the Lord had everything under control. There was a time to retreat and a time to remain, and He always did what was wise and right, and everything happened to Him, exactly in accordance with the timetable that His Father had set for Him.

And we are further told that great multitudes continued to follow Him, and He healed them all. But, then we are told something else which is recorded in several other places, and

especially throughout the Gospel of Mark. As the Lord healed all of those who were afflicted with various diseases, in verse 16, we are told, “Yet He warned them not to make Him known...” And so, once again, we find that our Lord was attempting to maintain somewhat of a low profile throughout the course of His ministry. In other words, He didn’t want word about Him to spread so quickly, at least at this point, until He had finished His main work at the cross.

Now, one of the obvious reasons for this, which we have considered in the past, is that, the Lord did not want the people to try to make Him a king. That was not His purpose, at this point. His focus was on providing spiritual redemption from sin, and not physical redemption from Rome (which, in the ultimate sense, would have done nothing whatsoever to rectify man’s main problem with God). And from an historical standpoint, when someone stood out in any sense among the people of God, often times, they would attempt to bolster that person up militarily, so as to organize a militia that could free the Jews from foreign oppression. We see this all throughout the history of the judges and the kings, and during the Inter-testamental period, when the Maccabees had gained power. Considering the fact that Jesus performed miracles, and that He was the long awaited Messiah, the motivation for the people to do this, would be very high. In fact, In John’s Gospel, we see that the people were, indeed, seeking to do this very thing. And so, Jesus wanted to keep a low-profile, lest a large multitude would attempt to force Him to become their King, which would in turn, bring the wrath of Rome and all manner of chaos, upon the nation. And furthermore, the Lord was not looking to destroy the Gentiles. Rather, He was ultimately looking to redemptively include them in His Kingdom, by way of His cross. And this was something the Jews were certainly not ready to come to grips with.

That said, Matthew then appeals to an Old Testament, Messianic prophesy, found in Isaiah 42, which attests to this reality. And by providing this Biblical proof, Matthew is able to dispel the false assumptions made by the Jews, about the Messiah. The Jews would have questioned why Jesus did not fulfill their militant expectations about the Messiah. And here, Matthew shows that their understanding of the office was, in fact, skewed and not according to Scripture. Jesus fulfilled the prophetic description of the Messiah, and His anti-militant attitude; indeed, His constant commands for individuals, whom he had healed, to tell know one, prove that He was, in fact, acting right according to Scripture. Jesus came to save Gentiles and not to

destroy them. And that is exactly what Isaiah's prophecy about the Messiah (in Isaiah 42) avows. Let us look closely at the prophecy now, and as we do so, we will also get another sweet and profound taste of the gentle nature of our precious Savior, brethren!

## **II. Christ, A Gentle Savior**

“Yet He warned them not to make Him known, *that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet* (that what was prophesied beforehand about the Messiah, might be fulfilled exactly to the letter), saying: ‘Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He will declare justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench, till He sends forth justice to victory; And in His name Gentiles will trust’” (vs. 16-21).

Let us then break down this quote from Isaiah 42:1-4, which was a well-known Messianic text amongst the Jews, which all the more strengthened Matthew's testimony in affirming that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. Having put their hope and confidence in molded images and idols, the people of God, who had gone into captivity (in the context of Isaiah 42) were now in despair as they had come to realize that the gods they had adopted from the nations were incapable of helping them. Jerusalem, the wall around it, and the temple, were destroyed and the people were now in exile at Babylon. And so, through Isaiah, God graciously offers them hope, not only in restoring them to their land, but especially in the coming of the Messiah. While in some small way, King Cyrus might be reflected in this passage as an immediate deliverer of God's people, I believe that Isaiah 42 is one of those texts that is so directed at describing the Person and ministry of the Christ, that it can hardly be used as a double fulfillment prophecy. There are things here that just could not apply to Cyrus in any true and meaningful way. Whatever the case might be, Matthew clearly shows us that this text has its highest and most literal fulfillment in the Person and work of the Christ.

He begins, “Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased!” The people had actually heard the Father audibly make this statement about His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, on more than one occasion, all the more proving that Isaiah 42 was

directly addressing Jesus. As the Lord Jesus Christ had been set apart, anointed, messiah-ed, unto the ministry of reconciling sinners to God by His death, God had audibly expressed His great pleasure in His chosen One, who faithfully took up the mantle and pressed forward unto the fulfillment of God's will, in the face of incomprehensible suffering. A body was prepared for Him, so that, upon living a righteous life, He could bear the wrath of God and die on behalf of unworthy sinners; unworthy sinners whom God had graciously set His love upon from before the foundation of the world. And so, the Father was pleased with the righteous life of the Son and His commitment to then enter into His earthly ministry at thirty years of age, which would ultimately lead to the offering up of His own Person on the cross, as the substitutionary Lamb for His people. This Beloved of God so loved His Father that He was willing to give Himself for the sake of the Father's elect. And every temporal, Old Covenant sacrifice, looked forward to, and anticipated the arrival of the true offering, who alone could actually remove sin, once and for all time, by His bloody sacrifice. And so, God was well pleased with His Beloved Son!

"I will put My Spirit upon Him..." And this is exactly what the Father did at the baptism of Jesus. And again, as many heard the Father express audibly His delight in the Son, they were also able to witness the Spirit descend upon the Lord Jesus Christ (as a dove) at His baptism, as He was now (following His obedient younger years), anointed unto His public ministry. Indeed, this was the very sign, given to that great prophet, John the Baptist, who upon seeing the dove descend upon Christ, immediately knew who He was. The Father had put His Spirit upon the One whom He had chosen to redeem mankind, and to reign as the King of all living things!

"...and He will declare justice to the Gentiles." Perhaps, one of the least understood portions of this text, at least for the Jews, was this short, and yet, profound statement. Had they grasped this, they would have understood that although the Messiah would ultimately destroy all of His enemies and reign forever, upon arrival, He would first call and welcome all nations into His Kingdom. He would not come as the typical military leader would come. He would not come and immediately take up arms against the nations, seeking out their destruction. No, rather He would come to declare justice to them, and to offer them peace. That is to say that He would open up a gateway into the Kingdom of God, whereby, the Gentiles would be able to enter in, legally and legitimately. It's another way of saying that He would declare the Gospel to the

Gentiles. By His atoning work, rather than conquer and destroy the Gentile nations, He would open His arms to them and graciously receive them, calling them to Himself through His Gospel. He would declare a just and righteous way of joining the people of God, for the Gentiles!

“He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.” He would not come with a loud, stirring voice, attempting to rally up the troops, so as to build His own militia. No, He would heal the lame, the deaf, the blind and the leprous, and He would proclaim the Kingdom of God, as that Kingdom which could be entered into, not by the sword, but by faith in Him alone, as the reconciling Messiah. And to this end, as Matthew records, we find the Lord commanding those whom He healed, not to go around telling everyone what He was doing. He went out of His way to avoid stirring up a public commotion and a national rebellion. Even with the Pharisees and religious leaders, while He did rebuke them, it was only to respond to their intruding upon the glorious work of God’s Kingdom, and their deceiving of the people away from entering in. And to this end, His only act of violence even, was when He turned over the tables and threw the money changers out of the temple, out of zeal for His Father’s house which was to be a place of prayer for all nations, and not a den of thieves. Overall, He sought to be discreet, and to travel about from town to town, proclaiming the truth of the Kingdom of God that had come upon the people, while performing the signs that would affirm His teaching.

“A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench...” Ahh, and here we see the general description of His demeanor, describing Him contrary to a tyrannical despot, as one who was thoroughly gentle and lowly of heart. Consider the description of our Beloved Savior’s character, brethren.

A bruised reed He will not break. What are we to make of this? Well, during the time of our Lord’s earthly ministry, reeds were used to make flutes, pens and other items. And as sturdy as a reed is, when it is cracked or damaged, it is incapable of being used. And so, as the designer inspected his reeds, he would take all of the bruised/damaged ones, and simply break them and cast them aside as useless. They could afford to do this because reeds were very cheap and easy to replace. And what of a smoking flax? Flax were fibrous plants that were used to make candle wicks. And when an Israelite sought to light a lamp, at times, the flax was flawed and would not

burn brightly or cleanly, and it would give off a terrible, acidic odor. The Israelite would then pinch the flax and put out what little flame was there, leading him to replace the wick.

And so, in both examples, our Lord was addressing the use of very common items that were easily replaceable and not of great value. Discarding them upon finding a flaw was no real burden to the Israelite. Well, what then is His point here? What is the prophet getting at, concerning His description of the Messiah? Well, simply put, the Messiah would be so gentle that He would be ever so compassionate toward those who were weak or struggling in any fashion. He wouldn't be harsh, and He would value greatly those individuals who were rejected by the general population. From a spiritual standpoint, even the bruised reed and the smoking flax, were things He would spare, and seek to restore unto a proper function and use. To this end, He would be very patient with all, requiring only that we trust in Him. And brethren, when we consider how our Lord dealt tenderly with the outcasts of society; with the lame, the blind, the lepers, the deaf, the beggarly; indeed, with tax collectors and sinners, we find this description to be totally accurate. Particularly to those whom the religious leaders wrote off, the Lord ministered and loved. He put great value on those who were generally deemed valueless; He ate with tax collectors and sinners, and with all who had nothing to offer Him in return. Such was the gentle and tender heart of our blessed Savior, brethren!

And how long will He bear ever so gently with sinners? "...till He sends forth justice to victory." That is to say, until He has completed all that He has intended, in accordance with His Father's plan of redemption; until He has perfected all of His beloved brethren; until He has accomplished justice and fulfilled all of the requirements of justice, bringing forth the full and complete victory for His own; and brethren, until He has completed the good work that He has begun in us. We will come back to this in a very practical way, in a few moments, brethren.

But, what better evidence could support this description of our Lord, than to consider the last portion of Isaiah's quote, used here by Matthew? "And in His name Gentiles will trust." Because He is ever so gentle; because He was determined to accomplish salvation for all nations; because He came not for Himself but for sinners; because He is a gentle, tender and gracious Savior, even the Gentiles will come to Him, and they will put their faith and hope in Him. They will trust in Him! They will trust in Him, because they will know, that, in spite of their terrible

sins and gross idolatry, He will forgive and receive them! And He will, through His own sacrifice, resurrection and ascension, bring them to the Father! No, He did not come to destroy the Greeks and the Romans and all of the other heathen nations. Rather, He came to proclaim salvation to them; He came to offer them the righteousness of God, freely in Him.

The Jews could not grasp this at the time, but that was not because God had not revealed it to them. Matthew here says, “Look, my Jewish kinsmen, you know of the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah. See what the text says! Bring your skewed view of the Messianic calling back to the Scriptures, and see what He was really to be like. And you will find that the Scriptures, rather than pointing to a Messiah as defined by the Pharisees and Scribes, actually point to Jesus of Nazareth!

### **III. Concluding Thoughts**

1) Brethren, revel in, process and apply what we have gone over this morning, to your own personal relationship with the Lord. If you are like me, you forget. And when difficult times comes, or when we struggle in our battle against sin, we tend to view our Savior apart from the biblical lens that is given to us. And so, once again, we have to view our Savior from an objective, Biblical lens, and not in accordance with our subjective feelings, especially during times of trial. Our Lord is gentle and tender toward us. He is compassionate to a degree that we cannot even identify with. He is patient beyond comprehension. And when we are broken, He doesn't yell or scream at us; He doesn't walk away from us; He doesn't say “What's wrong with you,” while rolling His eyes; He doesn't kick us when we are down.

He remembers our frame, that we are but dust. He identifies with us and shares in our sufferings. He comes along side of us and nudges us along tenderly. When we are beaten down in the battle against sin; when we are suffering in any way, shape or form, He deals gently and compassionately with us. Even when the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, it is to drive us to Christ for grace, forgiveness and strength to press on, and to continue in the battle, and never to condemn or beat us. He doesn't snap the bruised reed in half and toss it behind Him. He doesn't pinch out the smoking flax. No, He redeems both, and equips us unto useful service. What the blind and the deaf and the lame are physically, we can be spiritually and emotionally at times.

And how did He treat such individuals, brethren? Oh brethren, let us who are in the battle; we who are fighting a difficult fight toward glory, find joy in the fact that our Savior is ever so gentle and tender toward us.

2) And brethren, as Christ is with us, let us be toward one another, and others. What is your breaking point? How long is your fuse? What are the limits of your toleration of the faults and sins of others? At what point would you give up on someone who is prone toward spiritual weakness? How can we look upon the gentle heart of Christ, and sketch any limit to our patience, kindness, gentleness, tender-heartedness, compassion, long-suffering, and bearing with one-anotherness? Those who know anything of the love and gentleness of Christ should have very long fuses; indeed, they should be fuseless for that matter.

Let us ever be about the business of dealing tenderly with the weaknesses, sicknesses, faults and sins of others. Am I saying that we should not confront sin, or that we should leave the unrepentant in their sin? No. And there is a place for putting forth a strong hand. But, toward those who are struggling, we ought to be very tender, gentle and patient. This glorious attribute of our Beloved Savior, ought to be found, and developed further in us.

3) Finally, to those of you who are presently outside of Christ, some of you may think that your sins have brought you to the place where you are beyond hope. You might have a closet full of very large skeletons and a very large burden of guilt on your back. But see here, friend, there is a gentle Savior who is willing to receive and forgive you, if you would but come to Him in faith and repentance. And by His own cross, He will carry away and bury all of your sins, such that all of your guilt will be removed, forever. Will you not come to Christ today? Why will you perish in your sins and be given over to everlasting judgment, when Christ bids you to come to Him, now, in this life? That is what the gospel is all about. Jesus, the eternal Son of God, came into this world for the very purpose of saving sinners! And that's the kind of Savior we all need, desperately! Will you not come to Him today in faith? Will you not seek God in prayer, and plead that Christ would be your Savior and your advocate before the Father? For then, the Father would freely receive you. For, that is His will for lost sinners! Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25