

Isaiah 42:1–9: “<sup>1</sup>Behold 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.

<sup>2</sup>He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; <sup>3</sup>a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. <sup>4</sup>He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.

<sup>5</sup>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 on it and spirit to those who walk in it: <sup>6</sup>“I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, <sup>7</sup>to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. <sup>8</sup>I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols. <sup>9</sup>Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.”

### “God the Father of Salvation”

#### INTRODUCTION

We don’t say a whole lot about Him in the Creeds—He gets just one sentence in both the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds: “I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth—and of all things that are visible and invisible.”

He doesn’t get a whole lot of our attention during the holiday season—our focus for the past two months has been entirely on Jesus. We’ve celebrated the events of Christ’s first coming: His birth, the angelic announcement, the shepherds who visited Him, His name, and the Magi who brought Him gifts. And as we prepared for His First Coming, we look forward to His Second Coming.

And now that we’re in the season of Epiphany, our primary focus continues to be on Jesus.

Sometimes, God the Father is a lot like the father in this story from Erma Bombeck where she paints a portrait of a little girl who loved her dad but whose presence was entirely in the

background: “One morning my father didn’t get up and go to work. He went to the hospital and died the next day. I hadn’t thought that much about him before. He was just someone who left and came home and seemed glad to see everyone at night. He opened the jar of pickles when no one else could. He was the only one in the house who wasn’t afraid to go into the basement by himself.

“He cut himself shaving, but no one kissed it or got excited about it. It was understood when it rained, he got the car and brought it around to the door. When anyone was sick, he went out to get the prescription filled. He took lots of pictures ... but he was never in them.

“Whenever I played house, the mother doll had a lot to do. I never knew what to do with the daddy doll, so I had him say, ‘I’m going off to work now,’ and threw him under the bed. The funeral was in our living room and a lot of people came and brought all kinds of good food and cakes. We had never had so much company before. I went to my room and felt under the bed for the daddy doll. When I found him, I dusted him off and put him on my bed. He never did anything. I didn’t know his leaving would hurt so much.” (Family—The Ties that Bind ... and Gag!, New York: Fawcett Books, 1988, p. 2).

Though at times He works in the background, our heavenly Father is instrumental in every part of our lives.

WHILE CLEARLY OUR FOCUS MUST BE ON JESUS, OUR LORD AND SAVIOR, IT IS OUR DUTY TO THANK AND PRAISE AND SERVE AND OBEY GOD THE FATHER, FOR HE IS FATHER OF OUR LIFE AND SALVATION.

#### I. God the Father Works through His Son.

Today’s Old Testament reading is known as the first of four “Servant-of-the-Lord” passages in Isaiah. This passage is fulfilled in our Gospel reading, where God the Father anoints

Jesus with His Holy Spirit, and appoints Him to be His Servant, who will bring forth His justice to the nations—to carry out the salvific work of God the Father.

Jesus acknowledges His purpose in John’s Gospel, where He honors His heavenly Father with these words: “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me” (John 8:42); and, “For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak” (John 12:49).

In our text, God the Father says, “<sup>1</sup>Behold 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. <sup>2</sup>He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street...”

This text acknowledges that God the Father works through His Servant. First of all, this Servant of the heavenly Father would bring forth justice to the nations by proclaiming God’s Word. Jesus did this in His ministry of the Word—he was a preacher of the Gospel and this ministry continues through the men Jesus calls into the Preaching Office.

And Jesus didn’t need to shout or turn everything into a crisis to get your attention—like so many of today’s radio and cable TV personalities do, who can’t seem to talk without yelling, Jesus proclaimed the mighty Word of His heavenly Father. God’s Word doesn’t need to be shouted to be heard, it is the Word of the One who created the heavens and earth.

Furthermore, many people see God as vengeful and angry, but note that He sends His Servant to be the pastor for all nations. God the Father says, “A bruised reed He did not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench, he will faithfully bring forth justice.” Here is a picture of God sending His Son to demonstrate His tender compassion for us in our frailty and weakness. We are all bruised reeds—imperfect and sinful. Yet Christ has come to support and

protect, to comfort and forgive us in the weakness of our sins. And for those whose faith is fragile and dim, like a dimly burning candle, you can imagine your compassionate Christ cupping His hands around your to keep the unfavorable winds of this world from blowing out your faith.

And then God the Father says of His Servant, “<sup>4</sup>He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.” We talked in Bible study about how the allies of the antichrist wear down the saints with a constant barrage of false teaching. The work of the devil is to divide us from God and from each other by using false teaching and our own selfish motivations, jealousy, envy, gossip, ambition, harsh words and criticism.

But the Servant God sends will not grow weary or faint. In His work proclaiming the truth, rescuing us from sin and defeating our enemies, and supported by His heavenly Father, Jesus is relentless. And there is no match for His greatest work—forgiveness. In forgiveness, Christ heals the division between God and mankind, and between each of us. As long as there is Christ’s love and forgiveness among us, the work of the devil will come to nothing!

II. God the Father is jealous for you.

But then God the Father says to His Servant: “<sup>5</sup>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 on it and spirit to those who walk in it: <sup>6</sup>“I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, <sup>7</sup>to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

God is the creator of all things. Yet sin has corrupted His perfect creation, so God sends His Servant to restore creation—to be a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to free those imprisoned in the darkness of sin.

Epiphany literally means “to shine a light on”—to enlighten, to reveal, to make manifest. Through His preaching, His miracles, His life, death and resurrection, Jesus manifested His divinity and His divine appointment as the Servant through whom God would restore creation.

Finally, God the Father says, “<sup>8</sup>I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.<sup>9</sup> Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.”

It’s important for you to remember that as our Creator, God the Father loves you and sent His Servant into the Flesh to save you. So, I hope you can see why He is a jealous God. He will not share His glory with another—He hates everything in this world that comes between you and Him. Now, in our culture we don’t have crass idolatry—the worship of graven images—but we do have our idols—those things that come between us and God. Just look at the great American idol of entertainment. From TV to celebrities to sports to leisure—all these things work to undermine God’s Word in your lives and to separate you from God.

As the Father of your life and salvation, God doesn’t want to share His glory with anything else because He doesn’t want to lose you. He’s paid a great price to win you from death and damnation—the life of His Servant—His only-begotten Son.

## CONCLUSION

It is God the Father who graciously gives you His Son as your Savior—it is God the Father who gives you His Holy Spirit so that you may believe in Jesus and be saved—it is God the Father who gives you His Word of life, hope and comfort. Luther explains the First Article of the

Creed in this way: I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them. He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.

There was a little boy whose not-so-good friend was tempting him to pluck some cherries from a tree which his father had forbidden him to touch—“You need not be afraid,” said his evil companion, “for if your father should find out that you have taken them, he is too kind to hurt you.” “Ah,” said the little boy, “that is the very reason why I would not touch them; for though my father would not hurt me, yet I should hurt him by my disobedience.”

Because we have such a Father full of love and grace—who delights in us, His chosen servants—we thank and praise, serve and obey Him with gladness!

In Jesus' Name. Amen.