

My Servant in Whom My Soul Delights – Isaiah 41:21 – 42:9

Introduction – Isaiah’s sermon continues: God’s servants, fearful at the coming of Cyrus are assured that they, in contrast to the nations, had nothing to fear from the conquests of God’s servant. The message in the midst of this is the declaration of God’s determined will to make us more delighted in Him than in anything else. Fear, idolatries, and the consequent sinful lifestyles come from the lie that we need something more than Jesus Christ. Our faith in His salvation story is so unimaginative. But God would stir you up.

The Idol Delusion (41:21-24) – Over and over again, the Lord will make fun of, ridicule, and mock the weakness of idols. And so should we. He will also warn us to avoid them (1 John 5:21). In other words, idols are impotent *and* provocative. God, in turn, provokes the idols to make their case. Can they make sense of Creation (where we came from), or history (what has happened and why), or the future (what will happen), or eternity (where is this all going)? “Ask them, ‘If you are gods, explain what the past means – or, failing that, tell us what will happen in the future. Can’t do that? How about doing something – anything!’” – *The Message* paraphrase, Peterson. For Mesopotamia, the idols numbered in the thousands, but numbers or cultural consensus does not establish truth. Lest you think we are free of idolatry, remember: even in the OT we are warned that idols can be “of the heart” (Ezek 14:1-11). Calvin warned us that the human heart is a perpetual idol-factory. What are our idols? What are yours? “My salvation (happiness, security, holiness, success) will only occur if I have Jesus and _____.” That’s your idol. Look at what God says of your idol (v24) and say it with Him. Then walk away. Idolatry is tested by seeing whether or not that god (or system) knows the reason for Creation, the Fall, Redemption, and Eternity. God challenges those systems and so should we: “Why is that true?” and “Who says?” are constant questions to keep on hand. Man’s problem in all of life is that we keep going to false gods for their false salvation.

The Coming Deliverer (41:25-29) – In stark contrast, God brings forth His evidence. He will raise up a deliverer (v25) which no other god will predict (v26), and he will be a messenger of good news to the Hebrew exiles in Babylon (v 27, Ezra 1:1-4). History records that Cyrus came in from the north upon Babylon, having conquered Media and Lydia first. He heralded himself not a conqueror, but a liberator. In verse 28, the Lord makes clear, no other god, no other system, can make such prophecies with such accuracy.

The Song of the Servant-King (42:1-4) – Suddenly, the controversy ends and the Song of the Servant-King breaks forth. This Servant is in stark contrast to the idols. He is not an abomination (41:24); He is a delight (42:1). Cyrus, great as he and the Persian Empire were, is just a type. The baptism of Jesus unquestionably reminds us of this verse 1 (Matt 3:13-17). And Matt 12:18-21 quotes this section in order to comment on Jesus’ ministry. Therefore we learn about Jesus and the ministry of the New Covenant here in Isaiah. He is the elect One, God’s chosen Son, sent by the Father (John 3:16-17). God delights in the ministry of reconciliation, the work of this Servant, and so He pours out His Spirit upon Him. But the ministry of Jesus came without the pomp and glamour of a conquering king. He came quietly as a Servant (v2); He came to give His life for His people. He comes knowing our frame, our condition, our circumstances (v3, Psalm 103:11-14). And while He is gentle, “He will not fail nor be discouraged” (v4, Phil 1:6).

Social Sovereign Justice – “He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles,” “He will bring forth justice for truth,” “Till He has established justice in the earth.” The kingdom of heaven administers justice and *only* the kingdom of heaven administers true, world-wide justice. But what does this mean? The word means far more than a legal verdict or the righting of wrongs. It is certainly different than an envy-based, embittered demand for vengeance. It includes “building,” “constructing” and “setting right.” This is the word used in Ex 26:30 of the “pattern” of the tabernacle given to Moses. Such justice will never come from our own self-assertion, for our idolatries only corrupt and enslave us. This is why humanities social constructs, in the end, always reveal themselves to be unjust. We need to be delivered from the prisons of our idols. And that is precisely what Jesus came to do. The coastlands “shall wait” for this (v4), meaning they shall turn in devoted faith for the renewing work of this Servant (remember 40:31).

A Chorus of Sovereign Delight (42:5-9) – God spoke the Word and the creation of all things came forth. He gave Adam the breath of life. Now He speaks (calls) and the Word comes forth again, His Servant, the Creator, the New Creator. He is given as a covenant to the people, (He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life – John 14:6). What does this Servant do Who comes upon those who practice abominations with their idols, lost in their dark, blind prisons (v7)? He sets them free. The LORD stakes His name, His reputation, His glory, upon the salvation of the world (v8). But this is hardly a risk to Him, for “Behold, the former things have come to pass, and the new things I declare: before thy spring forth I tell you of them.”

What God Does – This is the God Who creates, sustains, redeems, and reconciles to the praise of His gracious glory. He kept His Word regarding Cyrus. More so, He kept His Word about the sending of His Son, the Servant-King. His salvation of the world is settled. So is yours. Come and welcome to Jesus by grace through faith.