

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
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**Septuagesima Sunday, January 31, 2010**

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Hymns 132:1-4, 105:1-3, 129, 343:1-3, 132:5

Lessons: Isaiah 60: 1-14, Romans 10: 12-21, Matthew 15: 21-29.

Text: Isaiah 49:1-6

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Jesus began His public ministry by preaching the good news of the kingdom of God. He especially concentrated on teaching His disciples. Later in his ministry, he began to make a steady emphasis in His teaching on His coming rejection, death and resurrection. The life of Christ comes to a grand fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in His vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of Israel and the world and then His resurrection.

In many places Scripture speaks of Jesus bringing salvation both for Jews and Gentiles. Our text is one of the most prominent places that fact is recorded in the Old Testament. Let's look today again at

**“THE SERVANT OF THE LORD”**

- 1. In Him, called before his birth to be God's Servant, God will display his splendor.**
- 2. It seems, for a time, that His work is in vain.**
- 3. He is to invite God's Chosen People to return to God in faith,**
- 4. But He is also to bring Gentiles to God.**

*"Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations."* Listen up, the prophet says! The entire heathen world is being called upon to give attention to the proclamation being made here. *"Before I was born the LORD called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name."* This identifies the Servant of Jehovah for His special service from the very hour of His birth; the words plainly indicating that an individual is speaking, and not the entire nation of Israel. This is the one who has received the definite name of the Messiah of Israel. In the New Testament, this is especially fulfilled in Matthew 1:20-22: *"an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet."*

We read in our text: *"He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver."* We are reminded of the words in Hebrews 4:12: *"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."* And we read in Revelation 2:12: *"To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword."*

The Lord God has equipped his servant with wisdom from God's Word and protected Him as he proclaims the Word of the Lord. *"In the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver."* The Lord has prepared the Messiah as an instrument ready for His service. We have the picture of a polished arrow. The word polished also means "selected, pure, clean, and chosen". This arrow is to be used at the time appointed by Him. Repeatedly during his ministry on earth, Jesus, as you heard last week, told his disciples to say nothing about some things until the time was right. The leaders of the Jews would have liked nothing better than to get rid of Jesus before he became a major thorn in their sides.

The servant says that The Lord Jehovah ***“said to me, ‘You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor.’”*** Why is the Servant called "Israel" in this passage? We know from the context that the nation is not being referred to because it will be the Servant who will bring the people back to God. The Messiah is called "Israel" here because He fulfills all of God's expectations for the nation. His mission is to restore Israel and to bring light to the Gentiles. The Messiah-Servant will receive the praise He deserves when He returns at His Second coming.

The Messiah is the true Israel, a name that means literally “man of God”. While Jesus was on earth, he was not attractive or desirable, except that he performed miracles for people – that is often why they followed him! Isaiah himself writes four chapters later: ***“He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”*** Isaiah 53:2-3.

It was only through his miracles, and his final victory, when he rose from the dead, that he was glorified by men. And, of course, as you heard last Sunday he was also glorified in the Transfiguration, when Peter and James and John got a glimpse of his glory and splendor and majesty on the mountain! It was only after his resurrection from the dead that he ascended bodily and visibly into heaven. Thus Saint Paul can write in Philippians 2:9-11: ***“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”***

The servant goes on to say: ***“But I said, ‘I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing. Yet what is due me is in the Lord's hand, and my reward is with my God.’”*** This is the Messiah speaking here in His role of true human being

Jesus labored and very few— almost no one – appreciated what he had done. What was due to Jesus – what he really deserved – was not what he was given. He was sinless. Yet he was treated like the worst of sinners. That was necessary, however, so that the worst of sinners – Me and you, if you think about it, would not be treated like sinners. We would then be treated like sinless, holy children of God because Jesus’ work and sufferings and death were undeserved. WE deserved such sufferings and death.

He was oppressed with sorrow and the fear of death in the midst of his work of atonement; yet surely, in spite of that feeling of depression and terror, he relied upon the righteous judgment of his heavenly Father. He entrusted himself completely into God his father’s hands. This is really the same thought which we find in the story of Gethsemane: If it be possible, take this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine, be done.

***“And now the LORD says-- he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD and my God has been my strength...”*** His calling is bring to the Lord the true spiritual children of Jacob, that the spiritual Israel may be gathered to Him, and that includes everyone who believes in Jesus as Savior, Jew or Gentile. This is one of the purposes for which the Servant of Jehovah is prepared. Despite the fact that men reject and despise him, he says, in the words of the King James Version ***“yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and My God shall be My Strength.”*** Jesus repeatedly turned to his heavenly father for strength. Though he was true God as well as true man, he repeatedly prayed to his heavenly father.

***“He says: ‘It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles.’”*** God says to the servant, to his Son Jesus Christ, I will make You a light of the nations so that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

In our gospel lesson you heard a Canaanite woman pleading for help. Jesus’ first answer was: ***“I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”*** Matthew 15:24. We could look at those words in two ways: He was sent to Israel, but they as a nation rejected Jesus as Messiah. And we could understand them as meaning he was sent to those who believed in the coming Savior but were led astray – became “lost” – because of the false teachers of Israel. He was sent first to the nation of Israel. When they rejected him by crucifying him, he became a light for the Gentiles, including us.

The Lord God said: ***"I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My Salvation unto the end of the earth."*** (King James Version) The Servant of Lord is also the Savior of the whole world, the believing non-Jews being fellow-citizens with all saints and of the true household of God. Although the children of Israel were the chosen people of the Lord, it is still true that there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. You heard in our Epistle lesson: ***"For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'"*** Romans 10:12-13. So we see the promise that the servant will bring his salvation to the ends of the earth and offer it to all men.

In Acts 13 is recorded just one place where the apostle Paul and Barnabas witnessed the rejection of the gospel by a Jewish audience. Paul said to these individuals, 'It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you repudiate it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles' ***"Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles." Acts 13:46. Then he quoted to them the words of Isaiah 49:6. "For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." Acts 13:47. Furthermore, when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. "When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed." Acts 13:48***

Paul uses this verse to support his identification of the Servant as the Messiah Jesus Christ. The Servant of the Lord is the ***"light of the world,"*** John 8:12 and the One who brings salvation to the ends of the earth. People all over the world, Jewish and non-Jewish, walk in darkness until Jesus Christ comes into their lives. He alone is salvation to all who believe on him.

Our text closes with the words: ***"that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."***

The devout man named Simeon, who was filled with the Holy Spirit, saw the infant Jesus in the Temple, took Him into his arms, and blessed God. He said, as we sing every Sunday 'For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, Which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, and the glory of Thy people Israel. In this way Simeon repeats or echoes the words of Isaiah. Listen again to Simeon's words: ***"For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."*** Luke 2:30-32.

We remember and realize in humility today that all mankind has been born into sin since Adam and Eve first sinned. As a result, all mankind would be condemned to hell, to eternal damnation. But God sent a redeemer, a Savior in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. That Savior paid the price for every one of your sins – for every sin of every human being! Believe it! That is the only way you can benefit from that eternal salvation. And God even works that faith, that believing in you. Today your eyes have seen and your ears have heard again the salvation of the Lord. Your eyes, ears and hearts are even now witnesses to that Gospel of Jesus Christ that gives the hope of eternal life. Believe that Jesus paid the price for all your sins. ***"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved!"*** Mark 16:16. We rejoice that we are among those whom God has called, this very day, to rededicate ourselves to Him!. It means eternal life for us because he died for our sins! Now, ***"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation"***. Mark 16:15. May God's grace, his undeserved goodness and mercy be with you all always! Hallelujah! Amen.