

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Second Sunday after Epiphany, January 15, 2012**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 66, 37:3, 508, 345, 45.

Lessons: Psalm 107:1-22, Hebrews 9:1-15, Matthew 11:1-6.

Sermon Text: Isaiah 42:5-7.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltritt

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

In our text, God plainly identifies who he is and that he has created all things. Did you notice all that he claims for himself? This surely is more than any human could claim.

Remember that God the Creator of heaven and earth cares for His people, giving them the breath of life and all that they need to sustain them while on earth. But he did more, in sending His Servant, his Son Jesus Christ, to establish and fulfill the Gospel promises. Today we are reminded that

**THE LORD SENDS HIS SERVANT TO OFFER SALVATION TO MEN**

- 1. The Lord who created all things sent this Servant.**
- 2. This Servant is sent for Jews and for Gentiles.**
- 3. This Servant opens blind eyes, frees the captives, and brings light to the world.**

God, Jehovah, the LORD, tells us about his power and emphasizes that he stands behind and with the great Servant whom he will send. *“This is what God the LORD says – he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it.”* God has power to do what he sets out to do.

That is evident in his creative power. Each Sunday we confess in the Creed that God created the heavens and the earth. That is not just a ritual formula we say in our worship services just because we’ve always said it. We really mean it. We are, after all, a confessional church. That isn’t just part of our name as a fellowship of Christians – the Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship. Perhaps you know people who attend a specific church but really don’t believe in everything that church or the church body their particular congregation is part of teaches or practices or tolerates. Perhaps you know people whose church confesses the same creeds we do but they don’t believe that God created all things in six 24-hour days. But we do believe that and confess that before the world – to anyone who will listen.

And our sermon text today repeats exactly that doctrine of creation. I am amazed that man has concluded that the starry heavens are so and so big – science books talk about distances so great in the heavens that they have to be measured in the number of years it would take light to travel that distance. Light travels 186,282 miles per second. It takes eight minutes for light to get from the sun to the earth, and our Milky Way galaxy is so large, we are told, that it would take light 100,000 years to travel from one end to the other. Some have calculated that our universe is as much as 14 billion light years wide. And many believe that it came about as a result of some kind of evolutionary process. This sermon isn’t a science lesson, but regardless of what some men believe, Christians believe that the Lord God *“created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it.”* How did God do it? We read in Genesis 1:3: *“God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.”* That’s how God did it and we accept it because God said so in his Holy Word.

Look at the picture in our text of stretching out the heavens, and then spreading out the earth beneath the heavens! All of that God did, from the creating the vastness of space to the tiny-ness of a speck of sand, and the infinite tiny-ness of all the parts of cells and atoms.

That creator-God is the Lord God who tells us that he has designated his Servant to be a covenant – a contract and agreement for the descendants of Abraham and a light for Gentiles. ***"I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness."*** These verses of Scripture, according to one source, are quoted or used in the New Testament at least fifteen times.

The Lord's servant was ***"called ... in righteousness"***. In connection with righteousness. The "righteousness of the Lord" is goodness and the perfection of the Lord, the standard principle by which he acts. He demands that the entire human race be righteous, that is, good, perfect, but at every step the human race – even his chosen people, Israel – has proven to be unrighteous. Even obedience to all the ceremonies of the Old Testament law has failed to produce a righteous people.

God devised a plan to provide righteousness to all humanity. In accordance with his purposes of love and his plan to rescue his people Israel and the entire world, he called this Servant to do his work. The apostle Paul wrote ***"This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe."*** Romans 3:22 God called this Servant, Jesus Christ, to carry out his righteous will for the deliverance of all humanity.

This would be difficult. But God says to his Servant: ***"I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you."***

Jesus, God's Son, the Servant of whom this chapter in Isaiah speaks is the fulfillment of all God's covenants. He fulfilled the Old Covenant – the Law – perfectly, and gave his body and blood as a new covenant to assure us that he really died for our sins. We might say that he lived to fulfill the old covenant and he died to establish the new covenant, but that would be an over-simplification.

This is the God who is pleased with his beloved Son. This is the God who ***"so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*** John 3:16 That passage speaks of the fulfillment of God's Servant's work.

Our Epistle lesson today speaks even more clearly of Christ's new covenant: ***"The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance--now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant."*** Hebrews 9:13-15

Jews should understand covenants, and especially God's covenants. But for Gentiles, to whom the idea of a covenant-God might not be so clear, the idea of light vs. darkness is clear. This Servant of God was sent to be ***"a light for the Gentiles."*** That idea and those words are as plain for us as the words of the aged Simeon who held the baby Jesus in his arms in the temple, words which we sing in our worship services: ***"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."*** Luke 2:29-32, King James Version

What Jesus did for the Jews, he also did for the Gentiles. While the Gentiles didn't necessarily understand the Jewish concept of covenant, they understood light and darkness. The New Testament speaks often of being called out of darkness to follow the true God. We read in 2 Corinthians 4:6: ***"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."*** We also read in 1 Peter 2:9: ***"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."***

Jesus freed us from spiritual bondage. He gave us freedom from sin, death, and the power of the devil. Jesus did not go around preaching social justice, as did Doctor Martin Luther King Jr. Jesus went around preaching the Gospel, freedom from sins through the New Covenant in his blood. He proclaimed God's justice,

that God forgives our sins because Jesus himself paid for them. Jesus paid for our sins through his sufferings and death, through his blood. The New Covenant in His blood is sure and certain because of His complete obedience to God's Law.

Jesus was sent as Servant of God for both Jews and Gentiles – for all mankind. And of all mankind, it is unfortunately only those who believe this who will benefit from it and receive the eternal life promised to all believers. That makes the urgency of our mission to share this good news you are hearing again today all the more important.

You heard again today that Jesus came ***“to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.”*** It is true that Jesus physically healed people of blindness while he was on earth. But this is much more than just that. Jesus came to open spiritually blind eyes with his Word. These words do not refer to physical blindness or physical bondage. History would show that Cyrus would deliver the Jewish exiles from the prison of Babylonian captivity, but God's Servant will deliver all who believe from the prison of sin. \*

We can rejoice in the words of Paul to the Romans: ***“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.”*** Romans 8:1-4

John the evangelist writes in John 8:12: ***“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’”***

Because of sin, every human – by nature – remains blind to the truths of God. This Servant would provide the necessary insight to see the grace and mercy of God. Without Jesus Christ, all humans are in spiritual bondage. All humans are slaves to sin and doomed to eternal punishment. This Servant would bring release from sin's bondage and from the dungeon of eternal damnation. Isaiah has written by inspiration in Isaiah 9:2: ***“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”***

It is the Lord's plan to deliver all the world through this Servant – if only they will believe. And he even works that faith through his word: ***“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”*** Romans 10:17

This Servant, Jesus Christ, lived a perfect life of obedience to God's law on our behalf, because we could not.

This Servant, Jesus Christ, died to pay the penalty for our disobedience to God's Law, so that we need not be punished eternally for our sins.

You are free. Now go and rejoice – confess Christ and the truth of God's Word in all you say and do.

You are no longer in the dungeon – the prison cell of Satan and death.

O Lord, lead us to believe your Holy Word. Like the father who pleaded for Jesus to physically heal his son, we, too plead with our God: ***“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”*** Mark 9:24 Amen.

\* Clarification: "... God's Servant will deliver all who believe from the prison of sin." I do not intend to say or imply that Jesus Christ died ONLY for those who believe. Jesus Christ died for all mankind. However, only those who believe will benefit from this. Later in the sermon I wrote "It is the Lord's plan to deliver all the world through this Servant – if only they will believe. And he even works that faith through his word: ***“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”*** Romans 10:17" While this sentence may clarify the previous quotation, I wanted to further clarify that Jesus died for all mankind, not only for those who believe.