

ISAIAH

42:1-9

Introduction

You are invited by God to "*Behold! My Servant...*"

"*Behold!*" is from a Hebrew word expressing *surprise* at what you see. It's not enough to study about Him; you must constantly be surprised by Him.

We'll see that God's Servant is none other than your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. That alone should surprise you - that God would send His Son into the world not to be *served* but to *serve*.

You continue to be surprised by Jesus:

1. Not only did He come into the world to serve, He came in human flesh.
2. He was born under a cloud of questionable heritage and in the most unfavorable circumstances.
3. He grew-up in poverty in Nazareth - a city that no one believed had anything good to commend itself.
4. He began an itinerant ministry announced by a man who walked out of the desert wearing camel hair and eating locusts.
5. His closest followers were a group of rough, argumentative, undisciplined, mostly uneducated men.
6. Ultimately He died a shameful criminal's death

The surprises don't end at the Cross:

1. Jesus rose from the dead; and He did it in a glorified human body that He will have for all eternity; and it seems He will bear its scars and wounds for all eternity.
2. He promised His followers He would return for them to remove them from the earth and settle them into mansions He is preparing for them in heaven.

Here is one of the biggest surprises of all: *In His absence Jesus expects **you** to imitate His servant-style ministry!* Addressing His disciples after washing their feet on the night of His crucifixion He said,

John 13:15 For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

John 13:16 Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him.

Jesus "sent" them - and **us** - into the world to continue His servant-style ministry.

The servant-style ministry is nowhere more beautifully stated than here in Isaiah forty-two. We'll see that the secret to the servant-style is the Holy Spirit. We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 You Serve In The Servant-Style Of Jesus When The Holy Spirit Comes Upon You, and #2 You Serve In The Servant-Style Of Jesus When The Holy Spirit Is Leading You.

#1 You Serve In The Servant Style Of Jesus When The Holy Spirit Comes Upon You (v1-4)

We know that Jesus is the "Servant" being described because these verses are applied to Him in the twelfth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. Before we see His servant-style in verses two through nine we see its *source* here in verse one.

Isaiah 42:1 "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One *in whom* My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him..."

Jesus was "**upheld**" and "**elect**." "**Elect**" means *chosen* and reminds us that it was the eternal plan of God to send His Son into the world to solve the problem of sin. It hints at Jesus Christ's deity since He was with the Father in heaven before He was sent to earth. "**Uphold**" means *maintain* and describes the humanity of Jesus as He walked in dependence upon His Father in a body of flesh and blood.

"I have put My Spirit upon Him." Jesus had many relationships with the Holy Spirit. For example: The Holy Spirit was involved in Jesus' conception. Jesus certainly was filled with the Holy Spirit His whole life. But at His water baptism by John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit

came upon Jesus in a special way and empowered Him for His ministry. Even though He was God, He was also man and, as a man, the Holy Spirit upon Him was the source of His servant-style ministry.

While we "**Behold! [God's] Servant,**" we also want to see ourselves as servants Jesus has sent into the world. We, too, are described in Scripture as "elect" and "upheld." I don't want to digress into a long discussion of the doctrine of election; we've done that elsewhere. I just want to note that Christians *are* described as God's elect from eternity, and we *are* certainly dependent upon God in our humanity.

More important to our discussion today is that you can have the Holy Spirit come "upon you." In fact, it was the promise of the risen Christ that He would send the Holy Spirit to come upon you:

Acts 1:8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has **come upon you**; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Jesus was talking to born-again men and women who were already saved; they already had the Holy Spirit indwelling them. They needed something further or in addition - and He indicated it was the Holy Spirit coming **upon** their lives to empower their methods and mission.

Let me give you a quick overview of your relationships with the Holy Spirit:

1. The Holy Spirit is **with** you before you are a believer, seeking to lead you to Jesus.
2. He comes **in** you at the moment of salvation, and you are born of the Spirit.
3. The baptism with the Holy Spirit is His coming **upon** you. It can occur *simultaneously* with salvation or it can be a *subsequent* experience to salvation.

The Holy Spirit comes upon you to empower you for your witness and service. He comes upon you as you simply ask and then believe in faith.

The servant-style of ministry that is produced by the Holy Spirit coming upon you is described in the following verses:

Isaiah 42:1 "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One *in whom* My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.

Isaiah 42:2 He will not cry out, nor raise *His voice*, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.

Isaiah 42:3 A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth.

Isaiah 42:4 He will not fail nor be discouraged, till He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands shall wait for His law."

At the end of verse one you read, "He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles..." This is repeated and amplified in verse four where you again read about "justice in the earth." "Justice to the Gentiles" and "justice in the earth" indicate the scope of Jesus' mission. It includes the whole world. "Justice" means *judgment*. Jesus is the Judge Who will eventually bring justice to the entire world. "The coastlands shall wait for His law" means that one day the Lord will rule and reign the earth and even the farthest nations will desire His righteous rule.

The verses inbetween give you insight into the methods or manner of ministry of Jesus as God's Servant - what we are calling the servant-style. And they instruct you how you, too, serve when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.

The servant-style has a particular voice:

Isaiah 42:2 He will not cry out, nor raise *His voice*, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.

Let me say that this doesn't mean Jesus always spoke quietly or never raised His voice for emphasis. The picture being drawn here is that of a rabble-rousing zealot in the Jewish marketplace seeking to gain a following for his cause. Jesus did not act that way - even though His cause was the greatest of all causes. He did not harass, hassle, and harangue people. He used no means of persuasion or manipulation other than speaking the plain truth of God's Word. He did not use words to try to flatter or intimidate people.

If the Holy Spirit is upon you, empowering the servant-style of ministry, you do not use words to flatter, intimidate, and manipulate - even for a good cause or the greatest cause of all.

The servant-style has a particular vocation:

Isaiah 42:3 A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench...

"Reeds" had many uses; for example, shepherds often made flute-like instruments from reeds to while away the hours and calm the sheep. The reed-flute would eventually become "bruised," meaning soft or *broken*. It was then useless and was discarded.

A "smoking flax" is a smoldering wick in an oil lamp. If the wick was smoldering it was because it was at its end and needed to be removed and replaced.

These images are intended to represent people whose lives are broken or at their end. Rather than discard them or replace them, *Jesus encouraged them!* In His hands the broken reed of their life is restored; the smoldering wick of their light is rekindled.

Restoring and rekindling was the Lord's vocation as He went about. If the Holy Spirit is upon you, empowering the servant-style ministry, it is **your** vocation to restore and rekindle broken lives at their end.

The servant-style has a particular victory:

Isaiah 42:3 ...He will bring forth justice for truth.
Isaiah 42:4 He will not fail nor be discouraged...

Verse three can be translated, "until He leads justice to victory" (as quoted by Matthew). Is there any doubt in your mind that Jesus will be victorious in the end? *Of course not!*

In the mean time... the servant-style ministry can appear to be a discouraging failure. Think of Jesus: At the end of His ministry He was killed and His followers mostly abandoned Him and scattered. Christianity seemed defeated. It wasn't; **it won't be!** Today we can

appear a discouraging failure; but Jesus promised that the gates of Hell could not prevail against His Church.

The problem is that we can so want to seem an encouraging success rather than a discouraging failure that we abandon the servant-style for a secular-style. We need more than ever to have the Holy Spirit come upon us. Many evangelical authors have used the quote, "If the Holy Spirit were removed from the Church, 95% of its activities would continue without any interruption." Maybe they are exaggerating for emphasis; but their point is well taken.

That leads us nicely to our second point,

#2 You Serve In The Servant-Style Of Jesus When The Holy Spirit Is Leading You (v5-9)

Let's read these remaining verses again:

Isaiah 42:5 Thus says God the LORD, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it:

Isaiah 42:6 "I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles,

Isaiah 42:7 To open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house.

Isaiah 42:8 I *am* the LORD, that *is* My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images.

Isaiah 42:9 Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them."

Verses five, eight, and nine describe the almighty power of God. From verse five I see that He created a universe; in it He created the earth; on it He created men and women with a "spirit" so He might enjoy fellowship with them.

From verse eight I see that God has revealed the "glory" of His "name." When Moses asked God to show him His glory the Lord answered by passing before him in His glory and telling Him His name:

Exodus 34:6 And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,
Exodus 34:7 keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin..."

From the end of verse eight and from verse nine I see that God's revelation of Himself is unique from that of all other religions in that His Word is filled with accurate historic prophecies. God's Word can be trusted.

These ideas are the setting for verses six and seven.

Isaiah 42:6 "I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles,

Remember: We're "behold[ing]" Jesus, but we can also apply these to ourselves as His sent-out servants. Let's go right to ourselves.

"Called you in righteousness" summarizes your salvation. If you are saved it's because you've been "called." You somehow heard and then responded to the Gospel. What you heard and responded to was that you were a sinner with no righteousness of your own, but that God could give you the "righteousness" of His Son, Jesus Christ.

If you are saved the Holy Spirit lives within you. Since He does you can be sure of His leading. His leading can seem mysterious, so it is described in the remainder of verse six.

First you're told He leads you as a Guide: "[I] will hold your hand." Jesus often said that He only did and said what His Father in heaven told Him to do and say. That's the idea here. The heavenly Father was like a father who reached out and took his Son's hand to gently guide Him.

You have the Holy Spirit within you (if you are a Christian) to be your guide through life. As you spend time with the Lord you develop an ear for the impressions of the still, small voice of the Spirit.

Next, you're told the Holy Spirit leads you as a Guard: "I will keep you." The word "keep" is *protect* or *guard*.

Christians try to express this ministry of the Spirit by using the word "peace." They say that they either *do* or *don't* have a "peace" in their heart about something. It sounds mystical; but again, it something that you develop over time by spending time with the Lord in His Word.

Then, you're told you are a gift: "I will... give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles."

In the New Testament you learn that the Holy Spirit gives you certain supernatural gifts. Some gifted individuals are themselves called "gifts" to the Church. The idea here is this: The Holy Spirit gives you gifts, and makes you a gift to others through them, as He sees fit. It's not up to you to pick and choose your own gifts. Thus He leads you into ministry according as He has gifted you.

Putting this together you can say that you are a *gift* to people as you exercise your spiritual gifts; and that you are *guided* and *guarded* as you go about your ministry.

Servant-style ministry must be led by the Holy Spirit. We cannot trust our own leading. There are multitudes of Scriptural examples:

1. The Old Testament judge, Gideon, comes to mind. Called upon to deliver his people, God first led him to whittle down his fighting force to almost nothing! Thirty-two thousand were too many... Then ten thousand were too many... Finally, at three hundred men, God was satisfied that Gideon's victory would be attributed to the Lord and not Gideon or his army.
2. Or how about an earlier story - that of Joshua's taking of Jericho. March around the city once a day for six days. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, blow the trumpets and shout, and the walls will fall down flat.

It's hard to find a Bible story that doesn't indicate the leading of the Holy Spirit, except where the character was disobedient.

It's important to be sensitive to God's leading because there are folks who God wants to reach through you:

Isaiah 42:7 To open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house.

These are metaphors to describe the human condition apart from Jesus. Men and women are like "prisoners" who cannot see because they dwell in a spiritual realm of total "darkness."

The message of Jesus is what "bring[s] out prisoners from the prison" and "open[s] blind eyes." The message comes through a messenger - **and that's you!**

Conclusion

This experience of the Holy Spirit coming upon you intimidates believers:

1. On the one hand, you might feel as though I'm saying you're not saved; that your faith is deficient. I know that was my reaction as a young believer...
2. On the other hand, you might feel as though the experience must be accompanied by some supernatural phenomena, like speaking in tongues or being slain by the Spirit. That's (unfortunately) how it is taught in many Christian churches.

In the Gospel of Luke, Chapter Eleven and verses nine through thirteen, Jesus says,

Luke 11:9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Luke 11:10 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Luke 11:11 If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if *he* asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish?

Luke 11:12 Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

Luke 11:13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"**

Who are you to "ask...seek...[and] knock" for in these verses? God the Holy Spirit.

And who is it that "asks...seeks...[and] knocks" for God the Holy Spirit? A *son*, a child of God! Those who have *already* been born again and in whom God the Holy Spirit indwells are instructed and even urged to *go on asking* for God the Holy Spirit to be poured out **upon** their lives!

You can "ask... seek... and knock" **right now!**

Based on God's faithfulness as your Father, you can believe by faith He will indeed give you what you ask - the empowering of His Spirit coming upon you!