

Who is Like the LORD? -- He is Gentle (Isaiah 42)

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Dominant Thought: God delights in gentle justice.

Objectives:

I want my listeners to understand the descriptions of God's Servant.

I want my listeners to feel comfort by God's gentleness.

I want my listeners to practice gentle justice this week.

Focus question: How is God gentle?

Who is the gentlest person you know? Maybe you are thinking of a grandma or a mother. Maybe it's the quiet presence of a friend or family member. Gentleness is one of the descriptions of the fruit of the Spirit. It is how Jesus describes Himself in [Matthew 11.29](#), "I am gentle and lowly in heart."

Do you picture Almighty God as gentle? In [Isaiah 42](#), we will explore how God is gentle.

First, God has a Servant ([Isaiah 42.1](#)).

As we continue reading through [Isaiah 40-66](#), we will encounter what some people call "Servant songs." These songs or prophecies describe the Servant of the LORD. In [Isaiah 42.1-4](#), we hear the first song. Other songs, in this part of Isaiah are: [Isaiah 49.1-6](#); [50.4-9](#); [52.13-53.12](#). Some suggest the servant is God's people, Israel.

As we look at the preceding chapter of [Isaiah 41.8-10](#), we read, "But you, Israel, Jacob, whom I have chosen...You are my servant; I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

As we keep reading through Isaiah, it seems that this servant moves from a group of people to a person. As we keep reading about this Servant of the LORD, we will notice He acts and sounds like Jesus.

In [Luke 22:27](#), Jesus says, “For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.”

As we read through Isaiah, we will encounter the same question again and again. Who will you serve? Will you serve the idols of stone or wood, or will you serve the living and powerful God?

While many of us don't bow down to images of stone or wood, we do bow and serve many false gods.

Second, God's Servant has His Spirit ([Isaiah 42.1](#)).

These words, “My chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him.” It sounds similar to the baptism of Jesus in [Mark 1:10–11](#), “And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.””

The Holy Spirit descended on the beloved Son, Jesus Christ. As we read about the Servant of the LORD in Isaiah, He will look and sound more and more like Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

Last Sunday, we celebrated Pentecost, a Christian holiday remembering the Holy Spirit coming on the first disciples of Jesus. One of our marks as followers of Jesus is to be Spirit-filled followers of Jesus. The fruit of the Spirit is described in [Galatians 5:22–23](#), “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

The fruit of the Spirit in [Galatians 5](#) shows us what it looks like to live in the Spirit. When we live with the Spirit, we hear His voice clearer.

One of our descriptions of a disciple of Jesus is Spirit-filled followers. Are we listening to the voice of the Spirit or the voice of the flesh? This week, take time to listen to the Spirit's voice in your life. Ask Him to lead you in service to our heavenly Father.

Third, God's Servant brings justice to the nations ([Isaiah 42.1, 3-9](#)).

In Isaiah's day, much like our day, people needed justice. The mission of God's servant is to bring justice to the nations. It is repeated several times in [Isaiah 41.1,3,4](#).

As we read through [Isaiah 42.5-9](#), it sounds like God's Servant may be His people, Israel. "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/nations" ([Isaiah 42.6](#)).

God wants to use His people to bless the nations, to bring His salvation to the world. As we think about justice as individual cases of right and wrong, here in [Isaiah 42](#), God wants His Servant or servants to share the love, light, and salvation to the world.

Unfortunately, God's people would fail in bringing justice and salvation to the nations. They would cave to the practices and sins of their neighbors. They lost sight of God's heart and His justice.

What Israel failed to do, Jesus would one day fulfill. Jesus would bring salvation and justice to the nations.

William Wilberforce (1759-1833), a member of Parliament in England, introduced resolution against the slave trade. His first resolutions were introduced in 1789. They were defeated along with other resolutions in 1791, 1792, 1793, 1797, 1798, 1799, 1804, and 1805. Finally in 1807, Parliament abolished the slave trade in the British Empire. It took 18 years from the first attempt to finally see the slave trade abolished.

In addition to abolishing the slave trade, Wilberforce set his eyes on the causes of those in need. He gave away one quarter of his annual income to the poor. He fought on behalf of chimney sweeps, single mothers, Sunday schools, orphans and juvenile delinquents (Source: *131 Christians Everyone Should Know* by Mark Galli and Ted Olson, page 285).

Wilberforce showed a faithfulness in justice to his neighbors and the nations. God's Servant brings justice to the nations. In what ways can you bring God's justice and salvation to your neighbors and the nations?

Fourth, God' Servant brings gentle justice ([Isaiah 42.3-4](#)).

The Servant of God is different than most leaders, kings, and rulers of history. Even though Cyrus of Persia showed kindness to God's people, most kings established justice through force, power and oppression, but not this servant. "God's answer to oppressors of the world is not more oppression, nor is his answer to the arrogance more arrogance; rather, in quietness, humility, and simplicity, he will take all of the evil into himself and return only grace. That is power" (John Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 111, referencing M. Lind, "Monotheism, Power, and Injustice: A Study in [Isaiah 40-55](#)," p. 432-446).

This servant would look like the child from [Isaiah 9:6-7](#), "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this."

This servant sounds like Jesus. He quotes these verses of [Isaiah 42.3-4](#) in [Matthew 12.15-21](#).

Jesus once again is facing off with the religious leaders. Jesus heals a man whose hand is shriveled on the Sabbath. The leaders plot how they might kill Jesus. Jesus knew what was happening behind the scenes. He leaves and healed all who were ill. He warned them not to tell anyone. Then, Jesus quotes [Isaiah 42](#) as a fulfilment of His mission and His Father's promise. This quotation from [Isaiah 42](#) is the longest Old Testament quotation in the gospel of Matthew.

Jesus doesn't cry out with loud speech. He's soft spoken and people may not hear Him. He will not break a bruised reed. In fact, he will try to support it. A smoldering wick He will not snuff out but trim it and give it more oil.

"Meek. Humble. Gentle. Jesus is not trigger-happy. Not harsh, reactionary, easily exasperated. He is the most understanding person in the universe. The posture most natural to him is not a pointed finger but open arms" (Dane C. Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers*).

Jesus shows compassion on all through His care for outsiders and oppressed. He healed those who were ill. He willingly submitted to the Father's plan. He didn't demand His rights when He was crucified. Then, as He rose from the dead, "He brought justice through to victory. In His name the nations will put their hope" ([Matthew 12.20-21](#)).

God delights in gentle justice.

"Christ was sent not to mend wounded people or wake sleepy people or advise confused people or inspire bored people or spur on lazy people or educate ignorant people, but to raise dead people" (Dane C. Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers*).