

How to recognize God's anointed Savior.

Text: Isaiah 42:1-7 for 1/12/2019 by Pastor Bolwerk

Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight. I am placing my Spirit upon him. He will bring forth the verdict for the nations. ²He will not cry out. He will not raise his voice. He will not make his voice heard in the street. ³A bent reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not snuff out. He will faithfully bring forth the verdict. ⁴He will not grow dim, and he will not be crushed until he establishes the verdict on the earth. The coastlands will wait for his teaching. ⁵This is what the true God says, the Lord, who creates the heavens and stretches them out, who spreads out the earth and everything that comes out of it, who gives breath to the people upon it and life to those who walk on it. ⁶"I am the Lord. I am calling you in righteousness. I will grasp your hand, and I will guard you. I will appoint you to be a covenant for the people, to be a light for the nations, ⁷to open blind eyes, to bring the prisoners out of the dungeon and to bring those who live in darkness out of prison.

Would you be able to recognize a real \$100 bill if someone gave you one? What would you do to determine if that \$100 bill is a real or not? You would most likely look at the bill's characteristics. You could feel the bill to see if it has raised ink. You will want to make sure Benjamin Franklin's picture is on the front. You can look for the watermark on the bill to make sure it is also Ben Franklin. And you can look for the special 3-D ribbon and color-changing ink on the bill. But what if you didn't know to look for any of those characteristics? How could you tell if it is a real \$100? There is a special marker you can purchase for detecting counterfeit bills. If you write on a bill with this special marker the ink turns from yellow to black if the bill is a fake. So even if you were not very familiar with them, there are things you can do to recognize a real \$100 bill.

As God speaks to us through his prophet Isaiah God gives us some information to help us recognize something far more important than a \$100 bill. Isaiah tells us ...

Theme: How to recognize God's anointed Savior.

I. The characteristics of the Savior

II. The work of the Savior

In our Bible text God calls the coming Savior his "servant." All throughout time there were many people whom God called his "servants." People like Abraham, Moses, Job, King David, and even King Cyrus of Babylon. All of these people served God and his good purposes in some way. In this portion of Isaiah God says, "**Here is my servant [...]**" (v. 1). With the first word he uses in that sentence it is as if he is pointing to someone specific saying, 'Here, look at this one right here!' As we read through these verses of Isaiah 42 it becomes clear that this is not speaking of any ordinary servant of God. This servant has special powers and blessings from God. Of all the people whom God called "my servant," how do we know which one is THE Servant? How do we know which one is the Savior God is speaking of here? It is the servant whom God anoints with his Holy Spirit who will be the Savior. This, of course, is Jesus. We heard in our gospel reading for

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today that **"After Jesus was baptized, he immediately went up out of the water. Suddenly, the heavens were opened for him! He saw the Spirit of God, descending like a dove and landing on him"** (Matthew 3:16). At Jesus' baptism God the Father anointed his Son to be the world's Savior.

But is that the only sign that lets us know Jesus is the Savior? No, because God goes on to tell us what his servant would be like. God does that by describing the characteristics of the Savior. We are told God will delight in his Servant, and the Savior will judge **"the nations, giving a verdict over all people"** (v. 1). Even though he will judge the Savior will be soft spoken. He will not raise his voice or yell at people (v. 2). The Savior will be kind and compassionate as he deals with those weak in their faith (v. 3a). He will faithfully judge and establish a verdict on the earth (v. 3b). And he will be a teacher and people **"will wait for his teaching"** (v. 4).

We see these characteristics in Jesus. At Christ's baptism God the Father speaks of his delight in his Son saying he is **"well pleased with him"** (Matthew 3:17). Jesus could judge the hearts and minds of people because as true God he knew their thoughts and feelings. Yet he never had to raise his voice. Even when people were straying from God, in kindness and compassion he used his words to work repentance in people's hearts. And many people gathered around him waiting to hear his teachings. Many in Jesus day saw Jesus characteristics and recognized him as the one God had anointed as Savior.

Do we recognize the one God anointed to save us? Do we delight in him and eagerly want to hear his teaching? Or do we find ourselves frustrated, or maybe even angry, at Jesus as he warns us about the sins we keep going back to. Do we find ourselves not so eager to hear the things our Savior teaches for fear he may point out our secret sins and urge us to turn away from them? Do we treat Jesus as if we don't want him around because he makes us look "bad" to others, or because he makes us feel bad about our sins? Do we frequently find ourselves sending God's Servant away until we want his services, that is his forgiveness? We may claim that we recognize God's anointed Savior, yet how often do we treat him more like our personal servant, than treating him like the Almighty God and Savior that he is?

Remember what God said about his servant? God's Servant would come to establish a verdict on the earth. Before God's anointed Savior came there was only one verdict that stood over this entire world: The verdict of "Guilty!" Adam and Eve brought that verdict on the world when they fell into sin, and every person born from that time on lives under that verdict. Every person comes into this world with sin, and that sin carries with it the verdict of "guilty." That guilty verdict comes with the punishment God demands for sin: eternal death in hell.

But God sent his servant into the world **"to faithfully bring forth the verdict"** (v. 3). Jesus worked to faithfully bring about a different verdict. We have broken God's law. God's servant Jesus perfectly kept God's law in our place. God demands that blood be

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shed for the forgiveness of sins; perfect blood, innocent blood. We are neither perfect nor innocent. So Jesus went to the cross and shed his innocent blood to pay for our breaking of God's law. The consequence of sin is eternal separation from God in hell. That is what we deserved. But on the cross of Calvary Jesus took our place. He allowed himself to be separated from his Father's love. He suffered hell for our sin and guilt and shame. Then Jesus gave up his life to bring about a new verdict: The verdict of "Not guilty!" God's anointed Savior paid the price for all those times we did not recognize him as Savior; for all the times we mistreated him or tried to use his service for our own selfish purposes. Yes, Jesus paid for all your sins. How do you recognize God's anointed Savior? Just look at Jesus and you see the One who fulfills all the characteristics of God's chosen Servant.

Knowing the characteristics of the Savior is helpful in recognizing the real Savior. Yet there is something else that is helpful. If we want to know how to recognize God's anointed Savior, we will want to listen to what God tells us about the work of the Savior.

God says of his anointed Servant: **"I will appoint you to be a covenant for the people"** (v. 6b). A covenant is a binding agreement between two parties. Normally, a covenant is "sealed" or "signed" by both parties who are connected to the covenant. But God's servant does not do that. He establishes that covenant himself, and we receive the benefits. What is this covenant that the anointed Savior will be for the people? On the night before he died Jesus tells us, **"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins"** (Matthew 26:28). This is a covenant of forgiveness established by God himself for our benefit. And God's new covenant is one sided: God forgives sin for the sake of the Savior.

That truth can be easier to forget than you think. When troubles come into our lives, when disaster strikes our homes, when illness and disease attack our bodies, that's when Satan starts telling us that God doesn't love us; that God is making us suffer for our sins. The devil tries to tell us that God is going to make us pay for our sins. Sometimes we believe him. And that is when we need to look again at the work of God's anointed Savior. Jesus established that covenant of forgiveness using his holy, precious blood. It is God alone who completed that work of salvation and established with you that binding covenant of forgiveness. You are reminded of that covenant every time you come to the Lord's Supper. There you are receiving Jesus' body and blood for the forgiveness of your sins. That work was the anointed Savior's work and it was done perfectly, faithfully, and completely.

And the benefits of the Savior's work became yours through the other work the Savior completed on your behalf. Isaiah tells us that God's Servant will **"be a light for the nations, to open blind eyes, to bring the prisoners out of the dungeon and to bring those who live in darkness out of prison"** (vs. 6-7). Sin blinds. Sin leaves us in the dark when it comes to God and his love. But Jesus, God's anointed Savior, removes that spiritual blindness. By the power of his holy word Christ helps us see sin for the death trap that it

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is. Our Lord helps us to see how sin destroys our lives and our relationships, especially our relationship with a holy God.

Once we understand the eternal consequences of sin Jesus opens our eyes to see God's love. Enlightened by the gospel, we see God's saving love for us in the work of his anointed Son. That God given knowledge creates in us the desire to turn away from sin, to turn away from the behaviors that destroy our relationship with our loving God. Then, moved by God's love, we reach out in love to share that love with others. We share God's love when we share with people God's anointed Savior. We can tell people of his characteristics: the kind, compassionate, and faithful Savior who did everything necessary to bring about the verdict of "Not guilty" for sinful people like us. We can speak to people about the Savior whose work frees us from our sin and guilt, and gives us a new life of faith. We can proclaim Christ Jesus, the anointed Savior, who gave his all so we could have it all: forgiveness, salvation, and an eternal life with God.

With more of our money transactions being handled electronically many of us may never have the need to be able to recognize a real \$100 bill. But there is always a need to be able to recognize God's anointed Savior. The ability to recognize that Savior comes from God's word. From the pages of the Bible we read, hear, and learn who the Savior is and all that he had done for us. We learn about the Savior's characteristics and his saving work. By the Holy Spirit, working through the Holy Scriptures, we can now recognize the one who not only saved us from our sins, but we recognize him who has given us eternal life. Amen.