

Focus Text

“Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all and ordered them not to make him known. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: “Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory; and in his name the Gentiles will hope.” **(Matthew 12:15–21, ESV)**

1. Servant's Strategic Silence

“Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all and ordered them not to make him known.”
(Matthew 12:15–16, ESV)

Jesus is aware of the Pharisees' plans for his destruction, so he withdraws from the synagogue in Capernaum. Matthew records that Jesus can't escape the popularity, and crowds follow him to continue the healings on the Sabbath. After all, Jesus is the Lord of “Sabbath” rest, and those who need healing and help draw close to Jesus because he brings them rest and peace.

Jesus, in an effort to calm the hostility for the moment, demands that those who receive his healings not make it known publicly. One of the central points of Jesus' mission is that Jesus has an allotted time to spread the good news of the Kingdom of God, and the time for his sacrifice isn't upon them yet. Jesus has more work to do and wants to monitor the tension for the moment.

For the modern-day Christian, this is a reminder of patience. Patience is one of the fruits that the Holy Spirit grants to us. Sometimes the people in our lives need a stern word of correction, but it may also be prudent to spend some time in silence before offering correction. As Christians, we work to build relationships and to guide gently. As the old saying goes, “slow and steady wins the race.”

“Jesus is concerned to deflect them from this path. He is not after a power base in public opinion to protect him from the hostility of the Pharisees.”¹

¹ Nolland, John. 2005. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

2. Chosen Confirmation

"This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles."

(Matthew 12:17-18, ESV)

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice." (Isaiah 42:1-3, ESV)

Matthew recalls Isaiah's prophecy about the chosen servant, the Messiah, who would come for Israel. Matthew then builds on the argument that Jesus' mission to bring about the Kingdom of God wasn't limited to Jewish communities, but that God's salvation would also extend to the nations (Gentiles). Common Jewish thought held that their role was to be God's chosen and sole vessels on earth. That the Messiah would come to help the Jewish nation overthrow other nations, and that the Jews would sit at the top of the governmental power structure. Other nations were supposed to be servants and slaves to the chosen nation. Matthew, defending Jesus' love for all people, reminds the audience of Isaiah's prophecy in which the chosen servant would carry the Spirit of God into the nations.

It's becoming evident that the Gentiles are receiving the gospel of Jesus more clearly than the Pharisees and the Jewish religious leaders. Matthew recalls Isaiah's words that the Messiah would also be the one who brings unity to all nations under their leadership. What's happening is that the poor, needy, and broken, both Jew and Gentile, are coming together and finding rest in Jesus and his power.

Today, Christians hold a tension. We believe that the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is the one true and Holy God. Our God is the supreme God, and the only one who should be praised and worshipped. We reject religious pluralism, which states that all religions are created equal. However, even in the worship of the supreme Triune God, we don't hold ourselves as better than other human beings. Jesus tells us that to be last in the Kingdom is how we become first. As Christians, we balance our firm faith in the one true God with the humility not to lord it over others. God is great, and we love others and pray for them with humility and love.

3. Compassionate Justice

"He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory;" **(Matthew 12:19–20, ESV)**

Isaiah's prophecy continues with a humble servant who is resilient in their mission to bring God's justice and victory. Matthew doesn't understand, yet this points to Jesus's saving work for humanity on the cross. At this time, Jesus chooses to withdraw from the public quarrel with the Pharisees because it would hinder the proclamation that the Kingdom has come. However, Jesus isn't defeated; he is being patient and deliberate in quietly continuing to heal and preach.

As American Christians, we see mega churches and have "celebrity" pastors, and this has clouded our vision of the simple truth that 90% of ministry is done in secret. Our public worship together is vital to equipping one another to be better followers of Christ. But showing up to Sunday service or wanting all our good efforts to be seen by others falls short of God's vision for the life of the Christian. Most of what God calls His people to do won't be seen by others, and that's by God's design. God observes our lives and is pleased when we serve him, and that should be sufficient. Whether your ministry is public and seen by many, or private and unseen, all our actions for the Lord are precious and special. Jesus is our example. He has withdrawn and is staying out of the public spotlight for now, but that hasn't stopped his preaching, healings, and efforts to bring the Kingdom of God to the world. Let's serve Him both in public and private and not worry about how many people "see" what we are doing. God sees you, He loves you, and He is pleased with you.

4. Hopeful Promise in Jesus Application

“and in his name the Gentiles will hope.” (**Matthew 12:21, ESV**)

As we kick start 2026, Matthew declares that Jesus is the hope of the whole world. We worship the one true God!

What is one way you can share the hope of Jesus with someone this week.

Some suggestions:

- A kind and encouraging note to someone
- A social media post
- A prayer with someone

We want to bring the hope of Jesus to our world in 2026! Amen.

“In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.”

(Isaiah 11:10, ESV)

“That the action of God was significant for all humanity in terms of judgment was a commonplace of Jewish theology, but that the God of Israel might be the hope of nations (beyond the Jewish) went far beyond normal Jewish thought. The claim is being made that the action of God now initiated through the Isaianic servant has goals as wide as humanity.”²

² Nolland, John. 2005. The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.