

Imagine if you got to listen in on a conversation between God the Father and God the Son. What would that be like? Wouldn't it be interesting to be a fly on the wall when the three Persons of the Holy Trinity sit down and discuss important matters together? Well, as a matter of fact, the prophet Isaiah had this very opportunity. In our text for this morning, Isaiah, by the Holy Spirit's guidance, records for us a fascinating conversation between God the Father and God the Son.

Verse 3 of our reading tells us about a **Servant** that God was going to commission: "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor," He says. Now, over the years many people have had lots of different ideas about who this servant might be. Some thought that it was Jeremiah, who came upon the scene about a hundred years after Isaiah. Others have speculated that it was King Cyrus of the Persians, who was mentioned in Isaiah 45. You may recall that Cyrus was the Gentile ruler who released the Israelites from captivity to go back to Israel. But the real identity of this servant is much easier to figure out. As we'll see today, **Jesus**, God's Son, fits the description of this "Servant" to a "T".

This morning, we will look at God commissioning His Son for this extremely important task. He does so with these words, "You are my Servant, Israel." And as we look at our Old Testament reading, we'll unpack the job description of God the Father's Servant: First, He is to be the servant Who would speak with powerful, piercing words. Second, He is to be the Servant who would appear to have a **failed** ministry. And third, He is to be the Servant whose work would extend not only to the people of Israel, but to **all** the nations of the earth.

First though, did you happen to notice to whom this reading is addressed? Who is this Servant talking to? The answer: He's talking to you, and He's talking to me. He says, "Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations." Isaiah wrote to the Israelites, but here, his audience is much greater. It includes people who live far away from Israel, and it even includes people who are separated from biblical times by thousands of years. Here, the Servant of God is talking to you and to me.

And first, He reminds you that He was God's choice to save the world even before He was **born** into the world. Remember when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary? When people have babies these days, they spend literally hours and days trying to come up with the perfect name for their child. Many expecting parents read books, search websites, and download apps to help them choose the right name for their baby!

Fortunately for Mary, she didn't have to go through any of that hassle when naming her first-born son. The angel Gabriel told Mary what God was going to name her baby even before He was born. The child's name would be **Jesus** – Why? Because the name Jesus means **Savior**, and that was God's way of letting the world know that this child was His choice to save the world from sin.

And as Jesus grew up, He proved with His words that He was the Son of God. And Jesus had some powerful words to speak. He wasn't afraid to call out the religious leaders of His day for being "white-washed tombs". Sure, they look nice on the outside, but on the inside there resided the stinking corruption of sin which is death. And when His own disciples failed to demonstrate faith in Him from time-to-time, Jesus wasn't the least bit hesitant to rebuke them, either.

But the most powerful words that Jesus spoke were not words of rebuke, rather His words of **comfort**. Just think of Jairus, the synagogue ruler who in broken-hearted desperation went out to beg Jesus to heal his sick daughter. When word came soon afterwards that the 12 year old had just died, the people told Jairus not to bother Jesus anymore. But Jesus spoke **comforting** words to this grieving father, "Don't be afraid; just believe." Then He went to Jairus' house and spoke words that had the power to **perform** what they say, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!" Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around.

Yes, all throughout His ministry, the Servant's **words** would be like a razor-sharp sword, like an arrow that would cut right through the heart. And Christ's words of comfort are still doing their work today. They've done their work on **your** heart. You aren't here this morning because you want to feel guilty for your sin. Maybe you came because you **already** feel guilty for the many times you've broken God's law this past week. You

aren't here to listen to how frightening hell is. You're here to let Jesus' words of comfort pierce right into your heart. The Servant has spoken with piercing words; powerful words; words of comfort, words of peace, words that remind you that Jesus has taken away **all** of your sins, words that remind you that since you are in Christ you are a new creation, words that remind you that heaven is waiting for you.

Back in our text, we see that not everything was going to be cheerful and pleasant for God's Servant. God the Father says about this Servant, that He is **Israel** "in whom I will display my splendor." God the Father is saying to His Son, "Your work is going to be magnificent. You are going to impress people with the work you are going to do." But then God the Son looks back on His work and says, "but I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing."

And here you get a sense of how low Jesus felt on Maundy Thursday evening. After 3 years of teaching, preaching, and performing astounding miracles, His last 11 followers had abandoned him. A 12th had betrayed Him. And this was after Jesus pleaded with His Father, "If it's possible, please take this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will but Yours be done." And then how much of a failure did Jesus **look** like the very next day when He was crucified for all to see and to ridicule? It **did** look like Jesus had spent His strength in vain and for nothing.

And sometimes that's how we are going to feel also, not only when we deal with the frustrations and fears of everyday life in this world, thought that is certainly part of it. But, more to the point of why we come here to God's house: When we feel like failures when we struggle against a sin and think we have it beaten, only to find ourselves slipping right back into it a little while later. Maybe you feel like a failure when you are thinking back to a chance that you had to open up your mouth and make a difference in someone's spiritual life, but you failed...the words you **could** have said came to your mind long after the conversation was over. But you know what? You have a Savior who can identify with you. Jesus went through the same temptations that plague you and me, except Jesus was without sin. And Jesus told us that it was going to be that way. He said, 'if they persecuted me, you better believe that they are going to persecute

you, too.' Which wouldn't be very comforting except that Jesus also said, "***But take heart***, I have overcome the world." You see, the Servant would ***appear*** to be a failure, but He ***wasn't***. And sometimes our efforts are going to ***seem*** to fail. But you ***can't*** be a failure if you are in Christ. Because Jesus' work was truly magnificent! When you are with Jesus, He forgives your failures and He promises to bless your efforts in your struggle against sin, your efforts to live a Christian life, and your efforts to reflect His light to others.

And being a light, that was the one more thing the Father was going to have His Son do. Verse 6 has sometimes been called the "great commission of the ***Old*** Testament," when God the Father says to God the Son, "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the ***Gentiles***, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." In other words, God is saying, "It's not good enough if just the Israelites are saved. I want those people from the islands and the distant nations also to be in My family, too."

God was never satisfied just to have the ***Israelites*** as His covenant people. It was His plan all along that both Jews and non-Jews would share in the salvation that Jesus would win. No wonder Simeon as he held baby Jesus in his arms sang that this Child would be "a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of His people, Israel." These are words which we often sing right after receiving Holy Communion: "O Lord, now let Your servant depart in heavenly peace!" Holy Communion is one of the blessed places where Jesus continues to serve us today with His forgiveness and strength.

But even back then, during His earthly ministry Jesus, the Servant, was thinking about you as He went to the cross. God's chosen Servant was thinking of ***you*** when He gave the command to His followers, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded." (What a blessing to be able to witness the Lord accomplishing just that in our midst today, as little Brook was brought into God's family through Holy Baptism!)

And this Servant Jesus is thinking of you ***right now***, as He is in heaven directing the world for you and for all His beloved children, just as He is here with us in this room through His powerful Means of Grace, His Word and Sacraments, sending His Holy Spirit into your heart. It was God's plan all along that Jesus would be your Savior too.

What's also amazing is that as Christians we are servants of the Servant, Jesus. We have received God's grace and now we share Christ's love in our words and actions with others. As His servants we shine the light of His love to others, telling friends, and family, and more of the hope ***they*** can have for this life and the next.

I wonder what God the Father and God the Son talk together about these days. I know one thing that brings them great joy is looking back on the completed work that Jesus, the Servant has done. But until that day when you and I can talk to God face-to-face, know for sure how happy God is to have you in His kingdom. And you can spend today and the rest of your days thanking God for sending this Servant Jesus to be ***your*** servant, the One who strengthens you in turn to serve others, and the one who will bring you to heaven. Amen.