

If I seem to be especially happy this morning, it's because Amy and I got to spend time with two out of three of our grandkids for belated, but very much appreciated, Christmas get-together with family. To me the greatest job in the world is being a grandparent. In so many ways, from holding a baby grandchild to listening to the "stories" of a toddler grandchild, attending big events and activities through their childhood and the big life changing moments of adulthood, there are so many things about grandkids that bring a great deal of joy into the lives of their grandpas and grandmas.

Children too, can bring their parents a great deal of joy **and glory** into the lives of their parents. For example, on more than one occasion, I've told parents about something great that I observed their child doing or saying. It might have been the excellent work the child did in confirmation or Religion class. It might be something very mature and thoughtful that the child said to someone else. It might have been that the child went out of his or her way to be helpful. And in most every instance, as I think about the parents, it doesn't surprise me. The child is merely demonstrating the same qualities that the parents have. Children can bring their parents a great deal of joy and glory..

Our Old Testament Reading for today describes a servant who brings God a great deal of glory. God even calls the Servant by name in our text, "**Israel**, in whom I will be glorified" (Is 49:3).

3. However, in the **first** Israel, that is, the Israel that we most often call by that name, made up of the descendants of Jacob, God was anything **but** glorified. He had chosen them to be His people and had promised to be their God and to bless them in abundance, which He did. They were to be His people, His servant in this world and among the other nations.

But their ingratitude for all that God had given them, their wandering eye that always found the false gods of their neighbors attractive, their injustice and oppression of one another—all of this brought God anything **but** glory!

Like Israel in the Old Testament, we, too, fail to bring God glory at times. We, too, can be ungrateful for the blessings God showers down upon us, thinking we earned them, we deserved them, or, worse yet, we are entitled to them. We, too, can find the gods of our neighbors very attractive and alluring. Not gods of medal or wood, but the pursuit of pleasure or leisure or any activity that prevents us from being in God's house to honor His holy Word. We, too, can think only of the ways that others can benefit us instead of the other way around, like ignoring helping out people who are in desperate need. Because we haven't got the time or we rationalize that someone else can help

instead of us. At times, we, like Israel in the Old Testament, fail to bring God glory, by loving ourselves first rather than loving God and showing love toward others.

2. Fortunately for everyone, both the Old Testament Israel and for every Gentile too, a new Servant would be sent by God. One who will be everything that the first Israel was not. You see, our Old Testament Reading is actually one of four sections in the Book of Isaiah called “Servant Songs.” All of them describe a particular “servant of the Lord.” And who is this Servant in our lesson? The only person who completely fulfills all of the characteristics of the Servant is Jesus Christ; God’s Son and Mary’s Son. And so, this Old Testament Reading is describing Jesus and the salvation He would bring, some seven hundred years before He will walk this earth.

This Servant of God speaks at the very beginning of our lesson and describes how the Lord called Him from the womb and named Him from the body of His mother. In other words, God had set this Servant apart even before this Servant was born. And God had named this Servant even before this Servant was born. Through this Servant, Jesus, God will be glorified.

And the most important way that God will be glorified by this Servant is when this Servant completes the will of the Father and voluntarily, willingly, lays down His life for the sins of the world. As Jesus said, “The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mk 10:45).

Jesus, in His High Priestly Prayer to the Father less than twenty-four hours before He would go to the cross, prays, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him” (Jn 17:1-2). In this Servant, and in His willing submission to the will of the Father to be the sacrifice for the sin of the world, the Father is glorified.

And nowhere is the glory of God more visible for all the world to see than on the cross of Calvary. There, Christ serves not only His Father, but all of us by paying the price for our sin. Stop and consider that in Jesus Christ, God Himself bows His head and dies for sinners. It is amazing! And in so doing, He reveals the glory of God for all the world to see.

This Servant will bring glory to God by the scope of His work. God says to His Servant in our text, “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth” (v 6).

This was no small, limited mission. Christ didn't die for *some* of the world's sin or for *some* of the world's sinners. As John the Baptist says it so precisely in today's Gospel, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the **sin of the world**" (Jn 1:29). His work was all-encompassing. He **is** a "light to the nations," and the Lord's salvation has reached "to the **end** of the earth."

1. And now, it's **you and me**, whose lives have been eternally changed through the work of God's Servant, who can reveal the glory of God to the world. Every day, we have the opportunity to let those around us see the glory of God through our words and through our actions. Because we are God's servants who follow in the footsteps of the Servant of God, Jesus Christ.

I looked up the definition of *servant* and found that it means "one who performs tasks for others." When we think of our lives now, we might slightly amend that definition to read, "one who performs tasks that bring God glory."

Freed from our sins, we are free to love one another as Christ has loved us. Freed from our sins, we are free to place the needs of those around us above our own. Freed from our sins, we are free to serve others in ways that God is glorified. We follow the example of Christ, who bound Himself in service to us. So also, we are bound to one another.

Usually, when we picture the life of a servant, performing whatever those tasks dictated by others, as being difficult. In a similar way, it is not easy being God's servant in this day and age. Our sinful nature, the devil, and the world will tell us to serve ourselves and bring ourselves as much glory as we can. Our culture is turning increasingly away from Christ and His Church, not seeing the need for a Savior and not wanting to entertain the idea that Christ is the Savior. Despite these challenges, God continually equips and strengthens us through Word and Sacrament to be His servants—serving Him and one another. May He empower us to do and say those things that bring Him glory. Remembering God's perfect Servant and all He did to serve God and us, bringing God glory, together may we be God's servants who bring Him glory. Then will be accomplished the timeless purpose, that in Christ, God's Servant, and in His modern-day servants, God is glorified. Amen.