

"You have seen many things, but you do not observe them; your ears are open, but none hears" (Isaiah 42:20)

Last week God, through His prophet Isaiah, challenged His people to "behold His Servant, whom He upholds; His chosen one in whom He delights, and upon whom He would put His Spirit...who would bring justice to the nations"!

Although unnamed, He was obviously speaking of His Son, Jesus Christ, the long-awaited Messiah, who He describes as coming (in His first advent) not in great fanfare or with a political agenda, but in meekness and gentleness! He "would not cry out or raise His voice in the street; a bruised reed He will not break and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish"! (Motyer describes His bearing as "unobstentatious and unself-advertising," while displaying His deity by healing the sick, raising the dead, and liberating people from demons!)

These prophetic words succinctly describe and are fulfilled by Jesus in His first advent, as recorded in Matthew 12:9-21 (and elsewhere), and explain why He was rejected by the rabbinic leaders who expected a conquering hero, and didn't understand His coming!

In this same passage, God identified Himself as the transcendent One who created the heavens and established, and sustains, the earth--and "gives life and breath" to its inhabitants. He is "Lord" and "will not give His glory to another"! And He "now declared new things" (concerning His redemptive plan) and called for all nations to praise His name and "sing a new song"!

Yet the time would come, He said, when He will "go forth as a warrior" to judge the world--after "keeping His silence for a long time"!

Our lesson ended with the promise that our sovereign God "will lead the blind by a way they do not know, and make darkness into light before them," but "utterly repudiate and put to shame those who trust in idols...and say to molten images, 'you are our god'!"

And that leads us directly into Isaiah 42:18-25, and last night's lesson, where God begins by describing His other "servant" (note lower case), Israel, as both "deaf" and "blind"!

"Who's so blind as My servant (Israel), or so deaf as My messenger, whom I send?"

And yet, as He promised in 42:16, "He will (in a day to come) lead them, and guide them, by a way, and in paths they do not know"!

What a contrast Isaiah draws in Isaiah 42 between "the Servant whom He upholds, His chosen one in whom He delights, upon whom He has put His Spirit," and the "deaf and blind" servant and "messenger whom He has sent"!

As Constable notes, "How ironic it was that God's messenger to the world, the one that He had brought into covenant relationship with Himself, was blind and deaf--blinder and deafer than any other, when it was Israel, above all others, that needed to be able to see and hear what her master told them, so that she could tell it to the world"!

Oswalt notes that just as Isaiah was the messenger of God to Israel, so Israel was called to be the messenger of God to the world!

The apostle Paul, in Romans 10:2-3, says that "they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge! For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God!"

Constable observes that "the nations were blind, but Israel was both blind and deaf"! MacA. notes that that they were "deaf to the voice of God and blind to the spiritual reality and duty"!

This is what God told Isaiah would be the case when He called him, in Isaiah 6:8-10--"Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' The I said, 'Here am I. Send me!' He said, 'Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; keep on looking, but do not understand; render the hearts of this people insensitive! Their hearts are dull, and their eyes dim! Otherwise they might see with their eyes, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed!"

Both Constable and Motyer note that the "cardinal sin" of God's servant, Israel, was to possess the divine word and (yet) to ignore it"!

As a result, Isaiah 42:24 says that God "gave Jacob up for spoil and Israel for plunderers (speaking of Babylon) and later, in 65:1, that "permitted Himself to be sought by those who did not ask for Him, and permitted Himself to be found by those who did not seek Him" (speaking of the Gentiles)!

Isaiah (speaking for the nations) adds: "Was it not the Lord against whom we have sinned, and in whose ways they(!) were not willing to walk, and whose law they did not obey? So He poured out on him (Israel?) the heat of His anger and the fierceness of battle; and it set him aflame all around, yet he did not recognize it (Amplified says "the lesson of repentance"); and it burned him, but he paid no attention" (Amplified says "lay it to heart")! ????

Adding these lamenting words in verse 2 (quoted by the apostle Paul in Romans 10:21: "But as for Israel He says, 'All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people"!

Footnote to lesson: "Even though Israel failed to learn from the Lord, He would still deliver her in the future out of pure grace" (43:1-7)! The apostle Paul, in Romans 11:1, says, "I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!"

Hear the Word of the Lord!

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