

## Christmas from Isaiah - Isaiah 42:1-9 - Jesus, healer of the broken relationships

**December 1, 2013**

For many, the holidays are a time to make some of their best memories. It is great to have extended family and children home for Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year. While Christmas can be a time to make some of our best memories, for others, it is a time to make their worst. Getting together with extended family resurrects old arguments that should have been buried years before. When a husband and wife have smoldering arguments lying just below the surface, it is the holidays, when spouses spend more times together, that those lingering arguments burst into flame.

Is that you? Is your heart bleeding because of broken relationships? If so, this morning is for you. We will learn how Jesus is God's gift of healing for all the broken relationships we face.

If you are new, I would like to welcome you. My name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. It is great to have you. It is also a privilege to have members of our Spencer campus this morning. They usually meet at the Seasons Center in Spencer but while they are in this pre-launch phase, on the first Sunday of the month, the Spencer campus comes back to the Spirit Lake campus where both campuses join together for worship and communion.

As many of you know, at Christmas I typically teach a short series focusing on Christ. For the last few years we stepped outside of the traditional Christmas texts and looked at Christmas from other books in the Bible. We studied *Christmas From the Psalms*, *Christmas From the Book of Daniel*, and

*Christmas From the Book of Revelation.* This morning we begin a study called *Christmas From the Book of Isaiah.*

Before we jump into our specific text for the morning, since we are starting an entirely new Bible book, it is appropriate for us to take a few minutes to orient ourselves to the book of Isaiah. The more we learn about this book's background, the better we will understand this book's message.

### Background of Isaiah

**Isaiah's family.** The book drops us clues about Isaiah's life. Isaiah was married. His wife was a prophetess. They had at least two children. Isaiah was part of the royal family. While it isn't in Scripture, Jewish tradition tells us Isaiah died under the persecution of the evil King Manasseh by being sawn in two. In Hebrews 11:37, where it talks about the heroes of the faith and some being sawn in two, that is probably a reference to Isaiah.

**Isaiah's ministry.** He had a long ministry. Isaiah 6 tells us God called Isaiah to be his prophet in the year King Uzziah died. That was in the year 740 B.C. We know that Isaiah continued as God's prophet to the people at least until 681 B.C., which means he was a prophet for 60 years. He lived through the reign of four kings in Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. That is a long time.

Kings of Judah	Years of Reign
Uzziah (Azariah)	767–740 B.C.
Jotham	750–735
Ahaz	735–715
Hezekiah	715–686

**Isaiah's name.** Isaiah's name in the Hebrew means, "God saves." Isaiah spends most of the book telling us about how God promises to save us. He promises to pick us up out of the ditches of life and fix us because we cannot fix

ourselves. I find this interesting because in Hebrew names are significant. That definitely proved true for Isaiah. His name described his mission.

**Isaiah is the second most quoted book in the New Testament.** When we did our Christmas from the Psalms study a few years ago, we learned the book of Psalms is the most quoted Old Testament book in the New Testament. The second most quoted book is the book of Isaiah.

**The book of Isaiah's problem presents a problem.** Here is where life gets interesting. When you look up scholarly works on this book, you immediately run across references to first Isaiah, second Isaiah, and third Isaiah. When you look in the Bible, the book of Isaiah is one book, but liberal scholars divide it into three books. Why? Isaiah, chapters 1-39 refer to events that happened in the eighth century B.C., during Isaiah's life. Chapters 40-55 refer to events during the Babylonian exile in the sixth century, long after Isaiah was dead gone. Chapters 56-66 jump even further and talk about events in the fifth century and even about the end of the world when Isaiah's bones are dust. How could he write about things when he wasn't there?

What is amazing is these future events are not talked about abstractly like when you read a fortune cookie or a horoscope, but they are very specific, down to giving the very names of people and actions of nations more than a hundred years before they happened. Here is the problem. Liberal Bible scholars say this isn't possible. Nobody could write about the future with specificity hundreds of years before it happened. Liberal scholars think Isaiah wrote the first 39 chapters. More than a hundred years later somebody else wrote the next part.

Another hundred plus years later somebody else wrote the third part and they all got stuffed into the same book and nobody realized what happened.

While do liberal scholars say this? They are committed to believing that nobody knows the future with specificity, not even God. It is impossible for God to tell Isaiah about future events with pinpoint accuracy.

The other thing liberal scholars are committed to is the stupidity of everyone in the ancient world. Do you think you could make two separate additions to the book of Isaiah, each a hundred years plus apart from one another to a book used in worship by the Jews and nobody would notice what happened? That is sort of like me getting up today and saying I wrote a fifth Gospel this week: Everybody close your eyes and stuff it in your Bibles and pretend you don't know I gave it to you. That is crazy.

There are a few more problems with claiming Isaiah was written by three different authors over hundreds of years.

**The Jews never believed Isaiah had more than one author.** Multiple authorship is something that came up just recently but was not believed for thousands of years.

**The New Testament claims Isaiah was written by one person named Isaiah.** For example, there are 17 quotes from the book of Isaiah in the New Testament, all of those quote are referenced as coming from one person named Isaiah.

My favorite quote to disprove liberal scholars' claims is John 12:38-41.

...so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

“Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” (*Isaiah 53:1, second Isaiah*)

Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said,

“He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.” (*Isaiah 6:10, first Isaiah*)

Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. John 12:38–41 (ESV)

What we have is the Bible telling us it was the prophet Isaiah who wrote both first Isaiah and second Isaiah, which describe events 100 plus years after Isaiah is dead and gone.

One person, named Isaiah, wrote all of Isaiah. Half of the book of Isaiah is God-given details about the future. The conclusion we are forced to draw is God knows the future. He told Isaiah exactly what he wanted Isaiah to write down. God is large and in charge of all things.

Let me give you one example of this extraordinary level of prophetic detail we find in this book.

...”who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose’; saying of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be built,’ and of the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid.’” Isaiah 44:28 (ESV)

Last year we studied the book of Daniel and learned Cyrus was the name of the Persian king that conquered Babylon. He set the Jews free from exile to rebuild Jerusalem. God inspired Isaiah to write about Cyrus *by name* 150 years before Cyrus was on the world scene. Cyrus wasn’t even born and he was named by God as the king of Persia who would conquer the Babylonian world power and free the Jews. The Jews weren’t even in captivity when this was

written and God was naming the one who would free them from captivity. This is some seriously freaky stuff.

**How does this tie into Christmas?** The second half of Isaiah contains detailed prophecy from God about things that would happen in the near future, such as the rise of Cyrus, and specific prophecy about the far future, even descriptions about the end of the world quoted in the book of Revelation.

In the second half of Isaiah, that has detailed prophecy, there are four passages scholars call the *Servant Songs*. They describe a mysterious person God will someday send into the world who would change everything about the way we relate to God and one another.

These four servant songs are found in Isaiah 42:1-9, Isaiah 49:1-13, Isaiah 50:4-11, and Isaiah 52:13-53:12. The New Testament is clear that this mysterious servant of the Lord, that Isaiah prophetically wrote about, is Jesus. Looking at these servant songs in Isaiah gives us a unique angle on Jesus' mission when he came to Earth in Bethlehem so long ago.

This morning, we are in Isaiah 42:1-9. We will learn how God sent his servant Jesus as a gift to heal our broken relationships. This text breaks into three headings: 1) The mysterious servant of the Lord is Jesus; 2) Jesus came to heal our broken horizontal relationships; 3) Jesus came to heal our broken vertical relationship.

Either follow along in the outline or open your Bibles to Isaiah 42. That is found on page 602 of your pew Bibles.

## The mysterious servant of the Lord is Jesus.

Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him... Isaiah 42:1 (ESV)

In the previous chapter, God was mocking the idols the people kept worshipping in place of him. This chapter introduces God's mysterious servant that is contrasted with the dumb idols of wood and iron people are living for. This doesn't pop in English but it is powerful in Hebrew. God said he was sending his servant but this servant would be different from prophets in the past. *He would be upheld.* The word uphold means this prophet was made to last. God himself would supernaturally sustain him. When it says he was *chosen by God*, the word chosen in the Hebrew means *set apart for a particular purpose*. *God would have a special love for this servant* that he hadn't had for prophets in the past. *God put his own spirit upon him.* Think about this description. The servant of God was a servant of God like Isaiah. He was a human being but God's own spirit was in him. We have a divine and human man, who was set aside by God for a special purpose and God had a special delight in him.

Reading this in Hebrew makes more of a statement than the English. From our perspective in history, this immediately starts to look like Jesus, but if you are like me, you wonder if we are stretching it a bit. Is this really Jesus?

Does anybody remember what happened when Christ was baptized? We read about it in Matthew 3:17. A voice came from heaven saying,

...and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." Matthew 3:17 (ESV)

Since we don't know Hebrew and Greek, we miss this. God's words from heaven about his son were a quote from two Old Testament texts. "This is my beloved son" is a quote from Psalm 2, which talks about God's appointed king who would rule the kings of the Earth. God the Father said the king who would rule over the Earth was Jesus his son. We studied Psalm 2 two years ago when we looked at *Christmas from the Psalms*. "With whom I am well pleased" is also a direct quote from Psalm 42:1. At Jesus' baptism, God the father identified Jesus as the mysterious servant of the Lord first prophetically talked about in Isaiah 42:1. What do the rest of these verses tell us about Jesus? He came to restore our broken relationships.

**Jesus came to heal our horizontal relationships.**

...he will bring forth justice to the nations. Isaiah 42:1 (ESV)

When we read this phrase, the first thing that comes to our minds is what philosophers call punitive justice. You are speeding, it will cost you a \$100 ticket. You murdered someone, it will cost you life in prison or the electric chair. While punitive justice is something Jesus will hand out, that is not what is talked about here. The Hebrew word translated as justice is *mispat*. It means *things are working just as they should*. Jesus comes to restore things so they are working just as they should. Let me give you an example. I have suffered with a cold for the last few weeks and each morning I woke up I was hoping God had set things right in my body. I want everything right so my throat, nose and lungs feel like they should. I long for a state of *mispat*, where things are working just as they should in my body. When we are healthy, we are in a state of *mispat*.



What is cancer? Cancer is the body not being in a state of mispat. The cancer cells are cells in our body multiplying out of control.

Mispat is not just physical, it is relational. Racial tensions between blacks and whites come from sin. The state of mispat is broken. Things are not working between people as they should. When you have a husband and wife, which are designed by God to produce the sweetest and most satisfying earthly harmony possible, are fighting one another rather than enjoying one another, that is a result of sin, and mispat is broken. Things are not working as they should.

The servant of the Lord, Jesus, came to restore mispat. He came to restore marriages broken because of sin. He came to restore broken relationships between people and races because of sin. He came to restore the brokenness and sickness in our bodies because of sin. This is one of the reasons Jesus healed while on Earth. He was restoring mispat, putting things back into the state of working order just as they should be. He was rolling back the curse of sin upon the Earth, our bodies and our relationships.

Today Christ still does what he came to do. When Christ is in charge of our lives, he restores mispat to relationships broken because of sin between a husband and wife. He restores mispat between races and peoples, and sometimes he even chooses to heal and restore our bodies. When Christ returns, he will fully restore mispat in this creation and ultimate in a completely renewed creation. How does he restore mispat?

**The servant of the Lord is gentle.**

He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street... Isaiah 42:2 (ESV)

This servant of the Lord is gentle with us as he restores. He doesn't get in front of people and yell at them. He doesn't berate them for their foolishness.

He doesn't run for office. He doesn't manipulate. He is gentle.

**The servant of the Lord is attracted to the broken.**

...a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. Isaiah 42:3 (ESV)

This is an amazing picture. What is a bruised reed? This is a plant that is broken but not broken off. What is a faintly burning wick? It is the flame that is almost out. The picture is a life that is broken and hanging on by a thread. This morning, is that you? Are you here hanging on by a thread? Jesus, the servant of the Lord, is here for you. He is drawn to you. He sees your brokenness and is attracted to you. He is here to faithfully bring forth the state of mispat in your broken life. You can rest in him. He promises to bring about restoration in your life.

This means the only source of healing for all the brokenness in this world is Jesus. If you are in a spat with your spouse, the answer is to turn to Jesus. He is the one who is the gift sent by God to restore relationships and bring them back into a right order. If you are in a conflict with your parents or your relatives, turn to Jesus. He is the one who restores relationships back to the way they were designed to be. God tells us to trust him. He will be faithful and restore mispat in our lives. Christ will restore mispat in our lives now. When he returns, he will restore mispat across the Earth and ultimately even make a new creation.

**The servant of the Lord will not give up restoring our lives.**

He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law. Isaiah 42:4 (ESV)

Jesus, the servant of the Lord, does not restore everything in an instant. He does it over time. He begins in our closest relationships and then he begins to work into restoring the harder relationships around us. The point is that Jesus will not give up. The process of peeling back all the effects of sin upon our lives and in this world will continue. Even when you think Jesus is on vacation, even when you think he lost track of you, he hasn't. What he began in you, he will complete in you.

**God promises mispat with a guarantee.**

I know all this sounds too good to be true. God knows it is hard to imagine that the servant of the Lord came to restore the most broken of marriages. The servant of the Lord came to restore the most hopeless of lives that are hanging on by a thread. The servant of the Lord didn't come to treat us roughly but to gently restore us. It seems too good to be true. God follows it up with a guarantee.

Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it. Isaiah 42:5 (ESV)

God says, "Remember who is giving you this promise, it is me. I am the one who created the Earth. I am the one who creates life. I am the one who put your spirit in your body. I can restore everything because I am the one who created everything. I am the only one who can do it because I alone have the credentials."

## **Jesus came to heal our vertical relationship.**

Now, we find God is restoring our broken relationships, not just with one another but the most broken relationship of all, our relationship with God.

“I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations...”  
Isaiah 42:6 (ESV)

Remember the context. We are talking about this mysterious servant of the Lord that we know is Jesus. What do we learn about him?

### **The servant of the Lord is without sin.**

...I have called you in righteousness...

This means right according to a standard. This servant of the Lord is the only one who met the standard of the law. He is free of sin.

### **The servant of the Lord has unprecedented intimacy with the Lord.**

...I will take you by the hand and keep you...

This servant of the Lord has an intimate relationship with God. He is led moment by moment by God the Father in a way that we long for but do not experience. The picture is of a couple walking in the park holding hands and refusing to let go. That is the kind of relationship God will have with this servant.

### **The servant of the Lord is the new way we relate to God.**

...I will give you as a covenant for the people...

This is interesting. As we are working on opening the new campus, we are working on leases with various properties. A lease establishes the way two parties relate to one another. A covenant is similar. In the Bible, God establishes a covenant which defines the way we relate to him. In the Old Testament times, when Isaiah was written, the covenant God established came from Mt. Sinai. It

involved the Ten Commandments, a temple, a sacrificial system, a priesthood and a lots of complicated stuff to deal with sin. The problem is that while it was a hedge against sin, it never kept anybody from sin or solved the problem of sin that separates us from God.

Here we learn that the mysterious servant of the Lord, will be a new covenant and will be the new way God relates to people. We see Jesus telling us he is this covenant right before he dies on the cross.

And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." Luke 22:20 (ESV)

Jesus' death on the cross for our sins set up a completely new way that we relate to God. Our relationship with God is based entirely upon what Jesus did for us and resting in him, not in what we do for ourselves.

**The servant of the Lord is God saving the nations.**

...a light to the nations...

What is interesting is when we look at the birth of Jesus, we find that shortly after Jesus was born, he was brought to the temple to be dedicated by Mary and Joseph. They met an old man named Simeon. The Holy Spirit was upon him and this is what Simeon said about Jesus.

"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." Luke 2:29–32 (ESV)

When he says "light for revelation to the Gentiles," do you know what passage Simeon was quoting? Isaiah 42:6. He was identifying Jesus as Isaiah's mysterious servant of the Lord.

What does it mean for Jesus to be a light for revelation to the Gentiles? It means Jesus is not just for ethnic Israel but that God has now moved beyond saving the Jews from sin and is now saving people from all over the world from their sin by Jesus.

**The servant of the Lord opens closed spiritual eyes and frees us from the bondages and addictions of sin.**

...to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. Isaiah 42:7 (ESV)

We covered this in our studies of the Gospel of John. Everyone is born spiritually blind. That means we do not by nature seek after God. We are not interested in God but quite happy being in rebellion against him. Since we are spiritually dead and cannot seek after God, God in his mercy seeks after us. God opens the eyes of our hearts, and all of a sudden, we get it and see who Jesus is and trust him. We were blind until God opened our eyes. The servant of the Lord also came to free us from bondage and addictions that come from life without God.

For some of you, that addiction is a bottle of alcohol. For some of you that addiction is Internet porn. For some of you the addiction is food; for others we are addicted to being the center of attention. We end up living for our addictions. The reason we do this is because we were created to worship God. If we don't worship him, we will worship something and that will become our addiction. Jesus came to free us from our addictions and our bondages to sin. He came to set us back into a state of *mispat*, not just with each other but with God.

Now I want to show you something fun. Do any of you remember how Jesus' ministry began? He got up front in his hometown synagogue, his hometown church, and it was his turn to read the Bible text for the day. He got in front of everyone and read from Isaiah 61, which talks about what will happen on the day the servant of the Lord, finally comes upon the Earth.

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Luke 4:16–21 (ESV)

Isaiah 61 talks about the day when Isaiah's mysterious servant of the Lord arrives, and it quotes Isaiah 42:7, about Jesus opening blind spiritual eyes and freeing people from the power of sin.

I love the way Jesus finished it. He rolled up the scroll and said, "Today these words are fulfilled. The mysterious servant of the Lord is here. That is me. I came to set people free from their sin and restore them into a right relationship with God." People were speechless. They just didn't get it. When they finally did get it, they ran Jesus out of town.

### **God gives a guarantee.**

"I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols. Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them." Isaiah 42:8–9 (ESV)

God said through Isaiah, "I know you think this is crazy. I guarantee you my servant is coming, and he will restore your vertical relationship with God and

your horizontal relationships with one another. I guarantee it.” God said, “By the way, I spoke prophetically in the past and it came to pass; now I am speaking prophetically about things in the distant future. Trust me, my servant is coming. He will solve the problem of sin and set all the relationship in the world back to the way they should be.”

The day this began to be fulfilled was in the womb of a young virgin girl named Mary who gave birth in a stable in Bethlehem. It was the most uneventful beginning for the most significant baby in the world.

## Conclusion

There are four things I want us to remember this morning.

1. **Jesus restores mispat.** He came to restore everything that is broken because of sin and put it back the way it should be. That means the brokenness in marriages, between people, in our bodies and ultimately in this world. It also means Jesus is the one who restores our broken relationships with God.
2. **Jesus is drawn to those who are hanging on by a thread and is gentle as he restores us.** If your life is a basket case, Jesus loves you. He is drawn to you because he wants to restore you. He will be gentle with you. Give your life to him. You can trust him to restore you.
3. **God is in complete control of everything, and he loves us.** The book of Isaiah is detailed prophecy about Jesus and the future, because God controls the future. He loves us so much he sent Jesus.





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