

ISAIAH

Chapter 42

The LORD's Chosen Servant

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. 2 He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; 3 a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. 4 He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law. 5 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: 6 “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, 7 to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. 8 I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols. 9 Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.”

42:1–9 First of four Servant Songs (42:1–9; 49:1–13; 50:4–11; 52:13–53:12). (TLSB)

42:1-7 Our text is the first of the four great Suffering Servant Songs, prophecies of Jesus Christ as the Servant of the Lord who will come to save God’s people. (The others are Is 49:1–7; 50:4–11; and 52:13–53:12.) Here the Suffering Servant is designated by God as *bəchiri*, “my chosen one.” The verb *bochar* “to choose” has roughly the same range of meaning as the Greek verb *eklegomai*, the word often used to translate it in the Septuagint and NT. “In the majority of cases where *bochar* (and thus *eklegomai*) is found, it is not man, but God who does the choosing . . . Yahweh is the subject, the one who chooses.”¹ God always initiates salvation; it is God who chose the place and form of worship (Deut 16:6f; 26:2), the City Jerusalem (1 Kgs 11:13), King David (1 Kgs 8:16; 11:34), the clergy (Deut 18:5; 1 Sam 2:28; 16:41), and his people Israel (Deut 4:37; 7:7; 14:2; Is 41:8; 43:10). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

42:1–4 Quoted in part in Mt 12:18–21 with reference to Christ. There are four “servant songs” in which the servant is the Messiah: 42:1–4 (or 42:1–7 or 42:1–9); 49:1–6 (or 49:1–7 or 49:1–13); 50:4–9 (or 50:4–11); 52:13–53:12. He is “Israel” in its ideal form (49:3). The nation was to be a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:6), but the Messiah would be the high priest who would atone for the sins of the world (53:4–12). Cyrus was introduced in ch. 41 as a deliverer from Babylon, but the servant would deliver the world from the prison of sin (see v. 7). (CSB)

42:1 All three persons of the Trinity are mentioned here. (TLSB)

Just as chapter 40 was connected to chapter 41 by a repeated clause, Isaiah invites us to read the end of chapter 41 along with the beginning of chapter 42. He does this by means of two catchwords in 42:1, both of which are also in the prior verse (41:29). (CC)

behold – hen – lo! (Strongs)

The first catchword is the particle immediacy, “behold.” It contrasts the servant in chapter 42:1 with the idols who were on trial in chapter 41. The trial scene in the previous chapter (41:1-7, 21-

29) is thereby carried into the First Servant Song (42:1-4). The servant's mission includes Yahweh's verdict that the cult statues have failed his courtroom challenge. This verdict is part of the divine "decision judgment" signified in 42:1, 3-4. (CC)

Behold – invites the attention of the world – both the Jew and of the nations – to a new revelation. It looks back to the similar expression of verse 24 and 29 of the preceding chapter, which draw down the curtain upon the idol-gods, while this "behold" reveals One who is to occupy their place, and to be a worthy object of the worship of mankind. (PC)

God announces this Servant boldly and dramatically. It is as if God had his arm stretched out and pointed to this one as His Servant. "Here He is!" No other servant of Lord received such an introduction, and God's announcement signals something quite different and important about this Servant as compared to all the others. If we were to place all these servants together and look at them, God would direct our attention to this Servant. For example, if all these servants were placed on a table and spread out like rare coins, God would be pointing at one of them saying, "Here's My Servant. This is the special one." (PBC)

my chosen. See 41:8–9 and note; Zec 3:8. In the royal terminology of the ancient Near East "servant" meant something like "trusted envoy" or "confidential representative." (CSB)

God chose to call many individuals His servants. The service they rendered carried out a wide variety of assignments: Abraham (Gn 26:24; Ps 105:6), Moses (Nu 12:7–8), Caleb (Nu 14:24), David (Is 37:35), Isaiah (Is 20:3), prophets in general (2Ki 17:13; Is 44:26), Eliakim (Is 22:20), Zerubbabel (Hg 2:23), even such heathen kings as Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 25:9) and Cyrus (Is 43:10; 45:1). The title occurs also as a corporate name for all Israelites to indicate the reason for their existence as a nation (Jer 30:10; frequently in Is 40–66). However, neither an individual nor Israel collectively can qualify as the Servant described in vv 1–9 and in the other Servant Songs (49:1–13; 50:4–11; 52:13–53:12). In these passages, it becomes progressively clear that Isaiah is not speaking "about himself or about someone else" among his fellow Israelites but is proclaiming "the good news about Jesus" (Ac 8:30–35). In Him alone, God's soul delights without ever finding fault, as "a voice from heaven" declared at His Son's Baptism and transfiguration (Mt 3:17; 17:5). Because the Israelites, even the best among them, were in need of forgiveness, they could not save themselves, much less atone for the guilt of their companions in crime throughout the world. But God was promising a sinless Servant who could redeem not only disobedient Israel but also all the nations. The NT validates this interpretation of vv 1–4 by quoting the passage as fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Just: "In Isaiah, if you have ears to hear it, God, speaking of Christ in parable, calls Him Jacob and Israel" (ANF 1:261). Luther: "He is calling us away from errors and therefore showing us someone else.... The prophet points us to the Incarnate One and says that in this Head alone, in the unity of faith, we who were formerly scattered must be brought together.... This was not written for Christ's sake but for ours, so that we may be sure about His work and teaching and may have certainty about the emptiness of our idolatry. Nobody understands these things unless he believes. You must believe that Christ is a servant. It is as Paul says (1 Cor. 2:2): 'I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.' ... This Christ is an offense to the whole world. Therefore, in order to give us certainty, this commendation of Christ is necessary. We see from experience that nothing is more absurd to the wisdom of the flesh than Christ, the Servant, and His Word. All are offended because of Him. All of us want to be God's servants while we please ourselves. Everything will be taken up and entrusted to Him alone. We should receive this with thanksgiving, but we attain to it ungratefully" (AE 17:60–61). (TLSB)

These are words of demonstration, as if he were pointing to something worth seeing. He is calling us away from errors and therefore showing us someone else. (Luther)

Who is the Servant? In 41:8–9, the nation Israel is explicitly identified as Yahweh’s chosen servant. Surprisingly, the Septuagint departs significantly from the Hebrew by introducing the names Israel and Jacob into the text of 42:1 in imitation of 41:8–9. Without question 42:1–7 echoes 41:8–13, especially the key words *servant*, *chosen*, and *uphold*. But the contrasts between them are even more striking: Israel is blind and deaf, while the Servant is perfectly obedient and a light; Israel is rebellious and deserves to suffer, while the Servant is sinless and suffers for the sins of his people. Moreover, the Servant has a mission to the nation of Israel, and therefore cannot be identified as the nation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Jesus frequently designated himself as a servant (Mark 10:41–45, etc.), and the NT frequently identifies Jesus as the Servant-Messiah. Nearly every section of the NT refers to a passage from one of the four Servant Songs or draws on the Servant theme. Matthew quotes both the first and fourth Song (Matt 8:17; 12:18–21); John quotes the fourth Song (John 12:38) and draws it (among many other OT passages) when he records that Jesus was named the Lamb of God (John 1:29). Luke quotes from the fourth Song in the account of Philip and the Ethiopian and explicitly identifies the Servant as Jesus (Acts 8:32–35). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

A prominent name for Jesus in Peter’s early sermons was Servant (Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30). Peter also explains the OT designation of Jesus as Servant to the Gentiles in his first epistle (1 Pet 2:20–25), and he quotes the fourth Song (Is 53:9). Paul quotes the second Song during his sermon in Pisidian Antioch (Is 49:6 in Acts 13:47) and twice quotes the fourth Song in Romans (10:16; 15:20). The identity of Jesus as the Servant is crucial for Paul’s Adam-Christ typology in Rom 5:12–21 and in his Christological hymn in Phil 2:5–11. Jesus Christ is the Chosen One (Luke 23:35), “chosen by God” (1 Pet 2:4), “before the creation of the world, but revealed in these last times for your sake” (1 Pet 1:20). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Yet there is a collective dimension to the Servant. As Israel was God’s chosen people in the OT, so the NT church, the body of Christ, is referred to as a “chosen people” (1 Pet 1:1; 2:9). 1 Peter draws on many Isaiahian themes, and particularly the Suffering Servant Songs. 1 Pet 2:21–25 quotes from Isaiah 53, the fourth Song, and the entire epistle is permeated with allusions to the Servant theme: “chosen” and “out of darkness into . . . light” (2:9), “called . . . suffered” (2:21), etc. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

It is vitally important that believers understand they are chosen servants. It is a matter of the gospel. No matter how altruistic or humble one is, to be merely a servant is to live under the law, and this results in despair or arrogance in this life and damnation in eternity. “Chosen” is the word which frees the servant from the bondage of the law into the liberty of the gospel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Here He gives Him the doctor’s degree. “If you want to know and be wise, look to this Christ, the Doctor and the One in charge and up and doing. Him I have put in charge. Keep your eye on Him, observe what He does, says, and teaches, because He is My Servant.” This was not written for Christ’s sake but for ours, so that we may be sure about His work and teaching and may have certainty about the emptiness of our idolatry. Nobody understands these things unless he believes. You must believe that Christ is a servant. It is as Paul says (1 Cor. 2:2): “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” (Luther)

Ebed – doer, tiller, slave (Young)

Israel was to be a kingdom of priests – Exodus 19:6 – 1 Peter 2:9 – He will not be like Israel, my rebellious and faithless servant, not even like my prophets, yielding an imperfect obedience. (PC)

Though the word “servant” in the original does mean slave, it is in this connection an entirely honorable term. If he is the Lord’s servant, his is an honorable task. Many have been designated by this title: Abram (Gen 26:24), the patriarchs (Deut 9:27), Moses (Numbers 12:7), David (2 Sam. 3:18), prophets (Amos 3:7), even Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 27:6), so the individual connotation of this title is far more common than the collective on a few instances Israel is referred to by this title. (Leupold)

This close relationship between God’s Servant, Jesus and God’s servants, His people, is visible also in the NT. Jesus assumed the role of a servant in His earthly ministry (Phil 2:5-11). He “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). The servant role is the model He left for us to imitate (John 13, especially v. 16), and the apostles are proud to begin many of the NT epistles by introducing themselves as Christ’s servants (Romans 1:1; etc.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

in whom my soul delights – the father supports and sustains the Son. John 5:26, “As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself.” (PC)

“If you want to avoid error, if you want to find Me, please Me, then hear Him, receive His Word, teaching, and Spirit, for He is My treasure.” Here our ears must be glued to His mouth. Look only at His mouth and Word, and you will not be led astray, though meanwhile Satan rages. (Luther)

Means to lay firm hold of and keep upright. (KD)

He is man whom the Lord upholds or supports. He needs help in His task and He enjoys the very maximum of help in that the Lord upholds Him in every difficulty. (Leupold)

The same Hebrew verb describes Aaron and Hur supporting Moses arms (Ex. 17:12). God’s “supporting” keeps people from sinning (Ps. 17:5; 41:12_ and protects them (Ps. 63:8-9) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

my chosen. The Servant’s work will be part of God’s greater plan. (TLSB)

Paul affirms the Old Testament understanding that being chosen is not dependent on human qualifications. He attributes being chosen and predestined solely to the grace of God; it is “according to the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:7). God’s purpose is for us “to be holy” (Eph 1:4), “to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves” (Eph 1:6). This purpose is accomplished through faith in Christ: “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Eph 1:7). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

God’s eternal choosing was actually experienced in our personal lives when we “heard the word of truth” (Eph 1:13). This word of truth is *mishpat* (Is 42:1, 3, 4), the “justice” or “righteousness” of God proclaimed by the Servant *leahemets*, “in faithfulness” or “in truth” (Is 42:3). “Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit” (Eph. 1:13). This sealing with the Holy Spirit occurs in the sacrament of baptism. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Christ was chosen from all eternity (Max Lucado – when Adam and Eve sinned, Jesus packed His bags for Bethlehem) in God’s counsels to the great work of man’s redemption and to be the Mediator between God and man. (PC)

The Servants work will be part of God’s greater plan. (TLSB)

In Matthew 3:17 (Baptism) and 17:5 (Transfiguration) the reference to this passage is so obvious that the evangelist must be viewed as indicating that this passage is a prophecy concerning the Messiah. (Leupold)

Means to be hand picked by God to accomplish His purposes. David (Ps. 89:3), Moses (Ps. 106:23), and the people of Israel (Deut. 7:6-7) also are described as chosen. As a chosen one, Moses stood in the breach and turned God away from destroying His people (Ps. 106:23) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

This echoes the thought of election. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

The Doctrine of Predestination

The primary point is that as God’s chosen we can rest assured that our salvation will not be taken away from us. Predestination is whatever God has done, is doing and still will do for us during our life on earth to bring us to faith in Christ and to preserve us in this faith unto eternal salvation. Some things to remember:

- 1) It is not a matter of chance.
- 2) It is not motivated by any personal merit on the part of humans.
- 3) People are not predestined to hell. That would be contrary to God’s will as expressed in 1 Timothy 2:4, “who desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.”
- 4) People can through willful and intentional neglect throw away their faith. There is no such thing as “once saved, always saved” [Cain Gen 4:16 – Pharaoh – Judas/Peter – Jews – Romans 1:24]
- 5) The life of the Christian is not in the hands of “fate.” In this short phrase three things are said:
 - Our destiny is in God’s hands,
 - The spirit in which God handles us is loving, and
 - Christ is the agent through whom our destiny is managed.

In the NT divine predestination is always presented in the context of gratitude for God’s grace, never is the sense of blaming God or questioning God’s choices. (LL)

2 Timothy 1:9 “who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,”

Both Christ and God’s people were ordained for their tasks before the creation of the world. Israel’s sacred history began with election – singled out for a divine purpose. When God wants something done, he calls for Himself people like Abraham, David, and Moses; and Christ selected His twelve. To be chosen always involves work, service, and mission. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

delights. Cf. Lk 3:22. (CSB)

This is nothing else than the preaching of the Gospel. It is spoken to you to strengthen you. Before the world He will be an abomination and an enemy of God. He will appear as nothing less than an opponent of God. “Before Me He will be a source of delight. By comparison with the flesh, the world, and the devil, in the eyes of the world nothing but the squalid and the weak will be manifest in Him. In My sight, however, He counts for very much. Therefore listen to Him, even if the world should regard Him as a heretic.” This consolation is necessary for us so that in this time we may cling to His Word and world, knowing that He is the elect Servant in whom God delights. Then we may boast in the saying: “I know for certain that the Word is true, even though all are opposed to it.” Alongside Him all our wisdom and power and treasure are nothing in the sight of God. Not only does He say that He will provide a teacher of the truth who will gather us, but He also says that He will grant the most delightful teaching. Understand this in terms of opposites: As my soul is irked by all religion, so I find delight in this Man alone. I started out to be brief, but I made it long because the text is so golden, so that I might encourage you in this time. (Luther)

Leviticus uses the word for sacrifices that are “acceptable” to God (Lev. 1:4; 7:18; 22:27). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

my Spirit upon him. The Servant is divinely authorized and empowered to carry out His assigned mission. However, He will not bring justice to the nations by forcing His will on the world by military campaigns as Cyrus did, treading down kings and rulers “as the potter treads clay” (41:25). There will be no noisy, flamboyant victory marches “in the street” (42:2). Yet, He will bring it about that even the weakest in His worldwide dominion will have a rightful claim to the benefits He bestows. (TLSB)

The second catchword is “wind spirit.” The verdict at the end of chapter 41 is that the heathen images are merely “an empty wind” (41:29). The Spirit who cannot be measured (Is. 40:13), empowers the servant to bring the verdict to the nations. The phraseology of the “Spirit” being “upon” someone occurs again in 11:2 and 61:1-3, connecting the Davidic Messiah of 11:1-10 with the servant here and in 61:1-3. Jesus is only person who perfectly fulfills all three descriptions. (CC)

“Friend, regard the righteousness of the laws and of the Pharisees as nothing, because I have not given them My Spirit, but My Spirit is in Him alone.” Paul referred to this with his highest praise: “In whom are hid all the treasures” (Col. 2:3), both physical and spiritual. Meanwhile He seems foolish, weak, and ridiculous, and therefore it is difficult to believe Him. For that reason He says, “To Him, to Him I have given the Spirit. No one ascends to heaven but He alone.” Therefore cling to Him and take nothing to yourselves except what is in Christ, because apart from Him we do nothing and are nothing but heaps of sin. Here, however, He gives us the Treasure, who embraces all those things which He accomplishes publicly through works and plans, as well as all remaining sin. Therefore He commends this unique God to us, because the heavens and earth and demons must tremble. (Luther)

On the OT level the reference to the Spirit almost invariably connotes power. So this statement means that the Servant is richly imbued with power. (Leupold)

God reminds us that He always first gives what He may demand later. His Servant will be endowed with His Spirit. The gift of the Spirit is not just knowledge, but power and insight into God’s will. (Is. 11:2) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

justice.† The weakest in his worldwide dominion will have rightful claim to the benefits he bestows. (CSB)

In this context, the term *mishpat*, “justice,” is a gospel term, not a law term. Unfortunately, there is no English equivalent that does justice (!) to it. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

“‘Justice’ is solely a result of God’s forensic ‘judgments,’ and the response determines whether the ultimate judgment is salvatory or damnatory. ‘Salvation plus’ or ‘both justification and sanctification’ would be better translations . . . [It] is that vicarious ‘justice’ we have in the covenant with Christ, namely the Gospel, by which alone we escape condemnation.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

That is, “He will lead you out among the nations. He is different from Moses. He will be a light and a lamp with the Word to the scattered nations, so that they may believe and understand rightly. He proclaims His words to Jacob and His judgments in Israel. He will bring forth His judgment beyond the synagogue and into the whole world. I sent forth the Word, and it went in a weak and sickly manner because it had a lisping tongue. Here, however, the preaching of the Gospel convicts the world of sin.” So you see that the kingdom of Christ consists in the Word, in rightful speaking, not in display, in gold and silver. It is, rather, a kingdom of righteousness, godliness, and harmony. (Luther)

This is the publication of Christianity throughout all the world. (PC)

It includes not only God’s wrath against oppressors but also God’s mercy. God’s wrath is pronounced against Israel’s wanton life, but God’s form of justice in Christ also provides His mercy and forgiveness. This word for “justice” is parallel to “righteousness” in Is 1:27, where God promises to redeem His people with justice; and again in Is. 9:7 where the Son of David establishes His throne – the kingdom of God – with justice and righteousness. The vicarious atonement of Christ for the sins of the world is God’s unique form of justice. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

Its root word means to “wash.” This ties the concept of justice and baptism together. Jesus fulfills God’s justice by being washed for our sin. In Matthew 3:15 Jesus replies to John’s questioning His baptism, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” God was bringing His justice through Jesus’ baptism. To understand Jesus’ baptism is to understand the cross, for Jesus began to take our sins upon Himself in Baptism. Thus God’s justice was satisfied in washing. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

TO THE NATIONS – First, note that the target of His words would be “the nations.” He would not only serve the single nation of Israel, but His work would also have value for the Gentiles. (PBC)

42:2 *not cry aloud or lift up his voice.* He will bring peace (see 9:6). (CSB)

The Servant is described in negative terms because there is no other basis of comparison for Him. He does not push Himself aggressively on anyone. All things and people are precious in His sight. (TLSB)

Israel's past service to Yahweh involved violent warfare, as in the conquest of the land under Joshua. The mighty Cyrus will serve Yahweh by subduing nations (45:1); he will tread on rulers as if they were mortar (41:25). Hanson writes: "The Servant, rather bears witness with quiet, patient gentleness, confident that the nations will be drawn to God's reign of justice not by dint of human force by attraction to embodied compassion and righteousness." In this way, he will be a light for the nations (42:6). This compassionate demeanor comes from fruition in the Fourth Servant Song (see 53:7). Several times in his passion, Jesus remains silent before his accusers (e.g., Mk.14:60-61; Jn. 19:9). His passive obedience allows God's plan of redemption to be fulfilled on the cross and at the empty tomb. (CC)

He (Jesus the Suffering Servant) is so sure of Himself and of the cause He represents that He can well expect His message to carry itself successfully through every test. How often Jesus shunned publicity, even though His aim was to carry His gospel to all men. (Leupold)

This passage is quoted in Matthew (12:18). It is an appreciation of the Word to make us take notice and be submissive and obedient ... He Himself will not be noisy in the streets nor make Himself heard in the open. How does this jibe? The noise is of two kinds: the noise of wrath and that of love. He did indeed cry in the preaching proceeding from love, but not in a noisy way, as the self-righteous and other sects are noisy. In opposition to their harshest clamor the prophet depicts the office of Christ as being most gentle and mild. This is to cry without being noisy, that is, teach gently without rage. In other partisan groups and judgments and lawsuits there is nothing but accusation and shouting on the part of those who suffer wrong on both sides, and even the judge shouts when he passes sentence. Thus the self-righteous are most turbulent, because all of them are by nature sad and stern, all of them are ready to pass judgment. They measure everything by the standard of their own life and most severely condemn everything else ... This is what it means for a Christian not to raise his voice, that is, in an uproar, but rather in grace. (Luther)

Although He is certain of His divine call, and brings to the nations the highest and the best, His manner of appearing is nevertheless quiet, gentle, and humble; the very opposite of those lying teachers, who endeavored to exalt themselves by noisy demonstrations. He does not seek His own, and therefore denies Himself. He brings what commends itself, and therefore requires no forced trumpeting. (The more unsure, the louder people speak – Parents, pastors, and teachers who need to remind others who they are usually in trouble or in doubt themselves.) (KD) Contrast the quiet Servant (cf. Is 53:7) with world conquerors such as Sennacherib (Is. 36) and Cyrus (Is. 41:5), who made loud and arrogant boast about their victories. But the Messiah/King comes as a meek one riding a donkey (Zech. 9:9; Matt 21:5). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

This is quoted by Matthew to explain why Jesus warned crowds not to publicize Him (Mt. 12:16). Jesus did not seek fame, nor did He want second-hand reports to distort the purpose of His mission. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

42:3 *bruised reed*. Someone who is weak (see Ps 72:2, 4). The servant will mend broken lives. (CSB)

Reeds were used for pens, etc. Wicks were made from broken flax fibers that could not be woven properly. Though of little value, these items are still handled carefully by the Servant. Cf 40:29; 61:1–3. (TLSB)

The breaking of reeds and snuffing out of wicks is imagery of warfare and death on a national scale. In the past Yahweh recruited Israel to engage in holy warfare and death to defeat the Egyptians and wipe out the native Canaanites. He also employed armies of other nations to execute his judgment. (CC)

This servant is called to a completely different kind of ministry. When he encounters oppressed people, he is not to oppress them further, but rather help them get back on their feet (cf. Lev. 19:34). He is to wield his God-given authority to care for those living on the margins of society (cf. Ps. 72:1-4). That said, idolatry disqualified Israel from serving with compassion. The more the Israelites worshiped violent and lustful gods, the more they reflected this life of hatred and abuse. Yahweh looked for justice, and instead he saw bloodshed (Is. 5:7). (CC)

Compassion for bruised reeds and dim wicks marked our Lord's ministry. He talked publically with immoral women, socialized with sinners and tax collectors, exorcised demons, healed the lame, and gave sight to the blind. Mt. 9:36 describes him with these words: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them." Another time, "Jesus called his disciples to him and said, 'I have compassion on the crowd' " (Mt. 15:32). And once, "having compassion, he [Jesus] reached out his hand and touched him [a leper]" (Mk. 1:41). (CC)

We move into the area of pastoral care. Wherever He finds men wounded and bruised by the harshness of life's experience, or wherever He finds wounded and bruised consciences, whether among the Gentiles or in Israel, there He is most tender and delicate in the gentle handling of these souls. (Leupold)

faintly burning wick – The Savior would make use of true pastoral mildness in dealing with hearts which are broken and contrite, not only by not driving them to despair, but by seeking them and caring for them with His full Savior's love. (Kretzmann)

Wicks were made from broken flax fibers that could not be woven properly. Though of little value, these items are still handled carefully by the Servant. Cf. 40:29; 61:1-3. (CSB)

Where the flame of devotion burns at all, however feebly and dimly, the Messiah will take care not to quench it. Rather He will tend it, and trim it, and give it fresh oil, and cause it to burn more brightly. (PC)

Not only will He not destroy the life that is dying out, but He will actually save it. His course is not to destroy, but to save. (KD)

John 3:16-17, "¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, ^f that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

He cups His hand around the flame that it may not be quenched or as one writer has put it, snuffed out. This will be the manner in which He will faithfully bring forth justice. (Leupold)

This is, brothers who are difficult in their habits, irritable, suspicious, and troublesome, men who see others as pleasant people and regard themselves alone as overcome with despair. Such people Christ also wants to carry. Christian friendship is different from the worldly variety... It is like a hospital, where there are the strong and the weak. The Christian life, therefore, is a mixture of strength and weakness. One supports the other. This is indeed a comforting situation. (Luther)

faithfully – emeth – stability, certainty, truth, trustworthiness. (Strong's)

2 Timothy 2:13, “if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.”

justice – He does not reign by means of weapons and force, still less by craft and guile, but He rules by truth without violence. For that reason the whole world is offended by this kingdom, because it makes its way in weakness. (Luther)

42:4 *grow faint*. The last Servant Song (52:13–53:12) makes clear how the Servant will establish His “justice in the earth.” There is only a hint about suffering here. Though He may become weak and exhausted by “the anguish of His soul” (53:11), He will not give up the struggle. (TLSB)

Jesus, our perfect Servant, fulfilled what servant Israel was unable to do. It was not by human might or power that he completed his Father’s mission, but by the Holy Spirit (Is. 42:1; Mt. 3:16; cf. Zech. 4:6). Unlike the nation of Israel, Jesus completes what he begins (cf. Phil. 1:6). He was able to announce, “It is finished” (Jn. 19:30). He succeeds (Is. 52:13). Mission completed! (CC)

Christ Himself will be the best teacher. He will not fail or put on a sour face like the self-righteous, who walk around stoop-shouldered in gray robes. This describes Christ’s personal manner and appearance against their sadness and sour mien, because He says, Matt. 6:16: “Do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces.” A Christian can well be pious and cheerful at the same time. This is said with regard to his person. (Luther)

his law.† As do the nations in 2:2–4. (CSB)

The Servant’s purpose is to establish salvation on the earth. Even the coastlands, previously zealous for their idols (41:5–7), should wait for the Law (instruction) of the Servant. (TLSB)

Law here means more than the OT ceremonial laws or even the Ten Commandments. It means all the revelation about this Servant – His Word, including the gospel. (PBC)

coastlands. He will carry out His work until He has established justice in the earth. But it will not be universal hostility and opposition that He encounters. Grace will have been doing some work on the hearts of men in distant coastlands. So the encouraging word is added for His teaching the coastlands do wait. Sometimes their longing will be dimly and not consciously define. But it will be there, even if at times it is little more than a negative preparation. (Luke 15:1-2) (Leupold)

The isles are the most distant of the Gentile nations and indicate the universal scope of the Servant’s mission. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

42:5–7 The Lord gives further purpose for His Servant; He will be a light to the nations, bring freedom, and heal the blind. Cf Mt 11:4–5. (TLSB)

42:5 *thus says God, the Lord* – It must be made perfectly clear that the announcement of the Servant of the Lord and His mission are from the Almighty; and so we have the solemn announcement of the present verse. (PC)

The article used before the word God gives a sense of the true and only God. He is about to speak of achievements so great that men might have doubts as to whether He is able to fulfill them. Therefore He reminds them of the fact that He is none less than the very Creator Himself,

who has the power to make the earth of nothing. Here, as so often, the Creator-character of God is the guaranty of His power to achieve any and all of the things He proposes to undertake (see 40:12, 13, 26, 28; 41:20; 43:1, 8, 12, 13 etc.) (Leupold)

created the heavens ... stretched. Yahweh employs his creative power to redeem his people (41:19-20; 45:8), using even darkness and evil to serve his salvific purposes (45:7; 54:16). Paul on Mars Hill quotes from a section of Is. 42:4 when he says of God, “He himself gives to all life and breath” (Acts 17:25). Both Isaiah and Paul extol the one true and triune God against the backdrop of idol worship (Is. 42:7; Acts 17:23). (CC)

Is. 42:5 unfolds in the same order as does Genesis 1. Four participles define Yahweh’s mastery over creation. They are, “the one creating/The Creator”; “the one stretching them out”; the one hammering out”; and “the giving one.” The heavy accent on creation counters the claims of the Babylonians regarding their cult statues. The empire professed that its deities were made in heaven, but Yahweh made the heavens. He gives life and breath to people, while idols are lifeless. That some of the comments in 44:5-9 are polemically aimed at the idolatry becomes clear in Yahweh’s claim in 42:8” he does not give his praise to idols. (CC)

In the preceding paragraph the prophet spoke of the person and teacher. He turned from the second to the third person. Now he again turns the speech to the Teacher Himself to tell us that we should listen to this Master alone and do it with sure confidence, and at once he summons us to this one school away from all other schools, as if to say, “This arrangement will stand, and none other will be made.” Thus he scares us away from hearing other authors and teachers. This is very necessary because the devil raises up outstanding, weighty, and varied schools. Therefore this text extols this Teacher so strongly to us. (Luther)

To stretch out or pitch a tent (Gen. 12:8). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

He spreads it out (literally “hammered out”) the earth and made it bring forth what it produces, for it is no sterile earth. He is the one who stretched out the heavens, with the ease with which a man spreads out a table cloth. (Leupold)

gives breath. Cf. 57:15. (CSB)

Recalls creation of Adam; God’s breath animates lifeless clay. (TLSB)

He did greater things even than these. He put animating breath into bodies so that they become living animated beings, and even higher than that, put spirit, a capacity for higher things, into these beings. (Leupold)

This can be read in light of the Spirit’s descent in the Gospel and outpouring following the Epistle (Acts 10:44-47). The Father not only gave life, through the Spirit he also gives new life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

42:6 *called ... righteousness.* Similar to the call of Cyrus. (CSB)

Despite the Servant’s losses and wonder at God’s action, God’s call to Him is righteous and holy, above reproach. (TLSB)

Just as Isaiah foresaw that Yahweh would mobilize Cyrus for “righteousness/victory (41:2; 45:13), he is told that Yahweh is beckoning his servant “in righteousness” (42:6). Both are

Yahweh's means to take what is wrong in the world and make it right again. Cyrus will be Yahweh's instrument for judging Babylon and for liberating the exiles. The servant will minister in such a way that all the nations will hear Yahweh's verdict against idols and then, turning from their sins, embrace the salvation of the one true God (45:22). When the lost are found (see Lk. 15:24) and idolaters repent and turn to Yahweh (see Acts 3:19; 26:20), this will display God's righteousness. (CC)

In this passage you see Him concerned with setting free from sin, with consoling, as He began, "Comfort, comfort My people" (Is. 40:1). For that reason He turns the address to the Teacher Himself in the second person. *In righteousness*, in teaching and promoting it. It is as if He were saying: "Outside of this Christ there is nothing but sin." Here Christ is set up as the only Teacher, Author, and Minister of righteousness. All others, Moses and the prophets, are teachers and ministers of sin, wrath, and death, as Paul beautifully describes it in 2 Cor. 3:9. Here, then, He says that the sole Author of righteousness is Christ. (Luther)

take you by the hand. Taking the servant by the hand harkens back to Is. 41:9, where the same idiom (to seize, grasp") pertains to Yahweh's call of the nation's patriarch, Abraham. Just as Yahweh commissions Abraham "to be a blessing (Gen. 12:2) through whom "all the families of the earth" will be blessed (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:8), so the servant is "a covenant for the people and "a light for the nations."

He now envisions His Servant as standing before Him. God is grasping His right hand to uphold and strengthen Him for the seemingly impossible task which is His. At the same time He is continually guarding Him against the many dangers that would assail Him and thwart His work. (Leupold)

keep you – "This, too, is the result of My power. They will have to leave You alone in spite of everything, even while all the tempests are raging. You will stand secure, for I am keeping You." Let us surely believe this alone, and then none of Satan's cunning can hinder us. (Luther)

covenant. See 49:8. The Messiah will fulfill the Davidic covenant as king (9:7) and will institute the new covenant by his death (Jer 31:31–34; Heb 8:6–13; 9:15. (CSB)

The Servant establishes a new covenant. Cf Mt 26:28. (TLSB)

There once was a covenant made with Abraham. This covenant was significantly expanded to involve all Israel at Mt Sinai. A greater covenant is now under consideration, one that involves all the nations on the face of the earth. In some mysterious way the Servant Himself is the essence of that covenant, not only the one who transmits it. (Leupold)

people. Probably the Israelites (see 49:8; Ac 26:17–18). (CSB)

light.† Parallel to "salvation" in 49:6 (cf. 51:4). Paul and Barnabas brought "the light of the world" (Jn 8:12) to the Gentiles by referring to this verse and 49:6 (Ac 13:47). (CSB)

Paul and Barnabas justified their bringing "the light of the world" (Jn 8:12) to the Gentiles by referring to this verse and to 49:6. (Cf Lk 2:30–32; Ac 13:47.) (TLSB)

42:7 *open eyes.* We are faced with a dilemma. Israel is introduced as Yahweh's first servant in 41:8. The servant is commissioned to open the eyes of the blind in this verse but then Israel is deemed blind in 42:19. *How can the blind lead the blind?* They cannot (cf. Mt. 15:14; 23:16, 24).

So another Servant is needed, one who will fulfill what Israel was unable to do. Jesus is this Second Servant. In one instance, he heals a blind man, but then is accused by the Pharisees of acting by the power of Satan, like a sorcerer (Mt. 12:22-24). Acting like Israel of old, the Pharisees are blind (John 9:35-41). (CC)

Jesus called Paul to be his apostle to the Gentiles with words that apply to corporate mission of all baptized: “to open their eyes so they turn from darkness to light, and from the dominion of Satan to God, so they receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified through faith that is in me” (Acts 26:18). (CC)

bring out...dungeon. From the prison of Babylon and also from spiritual and moral bondage (compare 61:1 with Lk 4:18). (CSB)

Those trapped due to sin, such as the exiles. (TLSB)

Yahweh’s agent brings nations out of their self-imposed incarceration in bondage to other gods. The verb “to go out” also appears in a similar missional call in 43:8, where Yahweh commands the nation to “bring forth blind people, yet who have eyes, and deaf ones, yet have ears.” Israel is to testify that Yahweh is the only Savior (43:9-11). (CC)

There are two matters here, ignorance and impotence, because apart from Christ there is nothing but darkness and dungeon. (Luther)

Unable and, what’s worse, unwilling to do anything about our condition, we love darkness rather than light. But in love unimaginable, the Servant Christ paid the price necessary to open our blind eyes, to free us from the captivity of sin and to flood the dungeons of our hearts with light. No wonder that in response to all this Isaiah exclaims in verse 10 “I sing to the Lord a new song!” (LL)

42:8 *I am the Lord that is my name* – Here He performs the act of exclusion. He strongly condemns everything that is taught apart from Christ, as if to say, “Do not undertake to be saved and justified in any other way. (Luther)

“I am Yahweh” is a nominal clause that encompasses the totality of the one true God. Yahweh is the Creator who gives breath and spirit to people (42:5). He summons, seizes, guards, and appoints his servant to be a covenant for the people and a light for the nations (42:6). His people are tasked with the goal of calling idolaters out of darkness and into his marvelous light. (CC)

God confirms His name (cf. Ex 3:13-15) and emphasizes again His uniqueness. (TLSB) Note from 41:4 – The Lord predates the beginning of history and will continue to exist after the last of temporal things has ceased to be (43:10-13). In all this, He does not change. (TLSB)

Jehovah, the Unchangeable One. (Kretzmann)

I the Lord, will do this, I who am all that the name Jehovah signifies: self-existent, eternal, self-sufficing, independent, omnipotent, and therefore unique, one whose glory cannot be shared with any other being that exists – least of all with images. (PC)

He who bears the distinctive name of God of Israel, the name Yahweh is jealous of this honor of His and will not allow it to be snatched from Him or awarded to any other, because this honor is so intimately tied up with the salvation of mankind. (Leupold)

my glory. An apt example of this exclusive claim of glory is when Moses arrogantly asked Israel in the wilderness, “Hear now, you rebels: from out of this rock shall we bring forth water for you?” (Num. 20:10). He and his brother presumed they could claim at least partial credit for the performance of a divine miracle. Despite Moses’ hubristic inclusion of himself and Aaron, Yahweh graciously furnished Israel with water. However, since he will not share his glory with another, he excluded both Moses and Aaron from bringing Israel into the land of promise (Num. 20:12). Yahweh alone would have the glory for doing that. (CC)

He uses the word *glory* because all the ungodly, too, shout about the glory of God but meanwhile arrogate this divine work to themselves, as Paul says to the Galatians (Gal. 6:13), “that they may glory in your flesh.” To seek one’s own glory is the source of all ungodliness, because it leads people to say, “This is what I have accomplished.” Here, however, He wants no one to glow except those who have come to know Christ. All glory is in Him. (Luther)

my praise to carved idols – Here he is speaking of the worship that is apart from Christ. You must understand the prophet’s reference to *graven images*. In Isaiah’s time every cult had its own form of outward sculpture. Thus when he speaks of images, we must apply this to the images of ungodliness and abomination in our time. It is impossible for us, as Christ says, to believe and to cling to the Word while we stand in our own glory. And the more outstanding the talents are, the greater is the glory, as we experience in the case of our enemies. Therefore we must fight against that beast with prayer alone. Let us, then, break loose from our own religion, worship, and works. Let us turn away from our idol and turn to the glory of Christ. (Luther)

All the gods of humanity cannot compare to the Lord. No god in any culture anywhere on the face of the earth can match what the Lord has promised and carried out. Yet there are many opinions about God. Contemporary theology does not erect new images representing deities as ancient theologies once did, but contemporary theology still fashions God according to its own thought. Without the Scriptures, contemporary theology and all subsequent theologies build a god different from the Lord. But there is no other God. There is no other deliverance. Apart from Jesus Christ, all is darkness. (PBC)

42:9 *former things.* Emphasizes, as did the earlier negative descriptions of the role of the Servant, that what is being done is something new (Jer 31:31-34; Luke 22:20; Heb. 8:1-13; 9:11-28). (TLSB)

In chapters 40-55, Isaiah often contrasts former events that Yahweh prophesied and carried out with Yahweh’s promises of new event to be fulfilled in the future. For instance, when Israel will return to the promised land, it will be like a new creation (e.g., 51:3; 55:12-13); just as Abraham was called from the east, Cyrus will come Persian in the east to deliver Israel out of Babylonian bondage; and Israel’s procession home will be like a new exodus (e.g., 43:16-21). In the context of idolatry, the claim that Yahweh oversees both old and new events asserts that he alone manages history. (CC)

Let him who has the ability have the name, since I can proclaim and do everything, but no one else can. This passage was treated above (41:22 ff.). But here you see how irrational we are, because the prophet cannot bring us to our God either by promises or by threats. He has to drive us to it because we do not want the proffered grace. A little while ago (40:18 ff.) we heard him boast of a weak God over all idolaters and self-righteous people, since He would prevail over them in deed and in word, something that all the idols could not do. These words must be heard through faith and the Spirit to strengthen our faith when nothing but despair is in evidence. We

must know that God can both say and do. Therefore His Word stands fast. So now the prophet represents all the faithful in extolling and praising the wonderful God, who gives strength to all things, even though He seems to be weak. (Luther)

The former things are all that God has done in the past. Among them would be the deliverance of His people from Egypt, and it happened as He promised. Other events happened as God predicted they would. He promised that Abraham's descendants would become a great nation. That happened as He promised. He promised King Ahaz that the alliance against him and Judah would fail. It did. He promised to deliver Jerusalem from the Assyrians. He did so. (PBC)

new things.† The things to be done by the servant of the Lord. (CSB)

These future events will come to pass as certainly as did the predictions of days of old. (Leupold)

42:1–9 The Servant establishes a new covenant to save the nations. Jesus Christ fulfilled this prophecy on your behalf. He frees you from your sins by His righteousness alone. • O Lord, I praise You for calling me by the Gospel and for giving me Your Holy Spirit, that I may serve You in righteousness. Amen. (TLSB)

Sing to the LORD a New Song

10 Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the end of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that fills it, the coastlands and their inhabitants. 11 Let the desert and its cities lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits; let the habitants of Sela sing for joy, let them shout from the top of the mountains. 12 Let them give glory to the LORD, and declare his praise in the coastlands. 13 The LORD goes out like a mighty man, like a man of war he stirs up his zeal; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes. 14 For a long time I have held my peace; I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in labor; I will gasp and pant. 15 I will lay waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their vegetation; I will turn the rivers into islands, and dry up the pools. 16 And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them. 17 They are turned back and utterly put to shame, who trust in carved idols, who say to metal images, “You are our gods.”

42:10 *new song.* To celebrate the “new things” of v. 9.

This new song (cf Ps 96:1; 98:1) is the response to the “new things” of v 9. It is a worldwide invitation (cf Is 12:4–5) to praise the Lord for what He will do through His Servant. (TLSB)

Isaiah had heard the wonderful promises of the Lord and recorded them. With these verses the prophet encouraged all believers to sing in response to those promises. (PBC)

The song overflows with joy over the redemption God promised and would bring to pass. It is not an old song celebrating the past victory of the Lord for His people, as is the Song of Moses (Exodus 15). This song proclaims wonderful new praise to the Lord for what His chosen Servant would accomplish. (PBC)

you. Sailors, who reach far-flung places. Those far off and those near are all invited to sing this new song. (TLSB)

end of the earth. God's prophet invites all the earth to sing this song: those who sail the sea, the inhabitants of the islands, and those in towns in the desert around Judah. This song filled the air and could be heard to the very ends of the earth – as far and as wide as the human mind could imagine. (PBC)

coastlands. These are the countries bordering the eastern Mediterranean. At first the inhabitants of the islands were terrified at the approach of Cyrus. They were included as beneficiaries of the Servant's glorious work. Now they rejoice because of His work. God always wanted the entire world included in His redemption. (PBC)

42:11–12 People are called to praise God for the victory and deliverance He brings. (TLSB)

42:11 *desert.* Since Judea is a quite barren land, the prophet means to say, "Whatever is there, whatever is desert, like the kingdoms of the Medes, etc., all of these must become participants in this worship." (Luther)

Kedar. This does not refer to houses, strictly speaking, but to tents. Because the Arabs are herdsmen, they carry their tents with them with all their belongings, and for that reason he says, "the dwellings that Kedar inhabits," that is, the Arabs. Kedar was a son of Ishmael, whose language was extremely widespread, and because of his language the Arabs are called Kedar. He means to say, "The Arabs, Ammonites, Moabites, and Jebusites, speaking the language of Kedar, participate in this song." (Luther)

Sela. The naturally fortified capital of the Edomites south of the Dead Sea, situated on a rocky plateau that towers 1000 feet above the nearby Petra. The name means "cliff." (CSB)

This song has traveled around so much that it has forced its way even into the most fortified places. It means that the voice of the Gospel makes its way everywhere, and no place is so fortified that the voice does not enter it. (Luther)

shout from the top of the mountain – Not only by the sea or in the fortifications but wherever there are people, praise to God must be proclaimed. This is the course of the weak Gospel, which gets through everywhere and is afraid of no one's power, as we are experiencing today. (Luther)

42:12 *give glory ... praise.* This is the one and only worship of God, *to give glory to the Lord*, not to us. Here you have the simplest, yet most meaningful words expressing emotions, like the simple words, "sing," "tell." "To give glory" are simple words, yet they are full of meaning, as I said above, "The more unpretentious the words, the grander they are," because here is the indictment of our own attitudes and our own resources. To sing in the hour of death—these are words of faith, not of reason. To sing is to sing that. (Luther)

All this praise is to be tendered to the true God of Israel, Yahweh, who alone can do such wonderful things that affect the destiny of all. (Leupold)

42:13 *mighty man.* God will fight as he did at the Red Sea (Ex 15:3). (CSB)

In this verse the picture changes. The song of praise flows from the mouth of grateful people because the Lord will march out like a warrior. In His righteousness God called the Servant and brought about forgiveness and deliverance from death and hell. The plan of God would mean that He would defeat His great enemy, Satan, and destroy Satan's greatest allies, sin and death.

The redemption of humanity would be the great prize of His victory. According to the first promise of His coming (Genesis 3:15), this Servant would crush the head of the serpent and restore peace, holiness, and joy. Picturing the Lord as a mighty hero is another way of looking at His work of rescuing sins and another cause for praise. (PBC)

zeal. Cf. 9:7; 37:32; 59:17; 63:15. (CSB)

Also translated “jealous wrath.” (TLSB)

He is said to work Himself up into a veritable passion (cf. 1 Sam. 17:20) (Leupold)

shows himself mighty. To cause panic among the enemy (see 1Sa 4:5–8). (CSB)

When sufficiently aroused, He will raise the war cry challenging His foe to the conflict. He will even “roar” in His anger. Then He ventures to assert before the conflict has even started that “He will prove Himself victorious over His enemies.” In this whole section it has been noted that there are no less than fifteen verbs used in reference to the various forms of activity in which the Lord engages. The whole scene is packed with action. (Leupold)

That is, with supreme noise and joy He casts down all enemies, just as He cast down the Arians, Romans, and all others. Their shouting is nothing. It is like that of Ahab, who had his triumph with Jezebel after having killed Naboth, but God had the last word (1 Kings 21:19): “Dogs shall lick your own blood.” So it will be with our opponents too. (Luther)

42:14 *For a long time.* † During the ages of the old covenant. (CSB)

I have held my peace – The Lord saw the awful condition of mankind for over 3000 years. He sent messengers to warn his people and even foretell the coming of Christ. These were ignored. God restrained himself until the proper time. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

Israel complains in 40:27 that Yahweh is silent (cf. Ps. 44:23). During the future Babylonian exile, the captives will resonate with this complaint. For seventy years, Yahweh will not intervene (cf. 54:7-8). In the context of 42:14, therefore, it would be an exaggeration to interpret Yahweh’ silence “for a long time as “from eternity.” But for Israel in exile, it will feel as if Yahweh has been silent forever. (CC)

Just like it must feel like an eternity for a mother who is pregnant for nine months before she suddenly delivers her child, so Israel is about to be birthed out of bondage and into a new life. For those who will be exiled in Babylon, the long night of their abandonment will give way to the morning of salvation when Cyrus permits them to return home (cf. Ps. 30:5). There will be an even longer wait of some seven centuries between the ministry of Isaiah and the birth of the Servant Messiah (Is. 7:14; 9:6-7; 11:1; 53:2; Mt. 1:1,23). The new exodus will be a kind of new birth (cf. 49:20-22). Israel is about to be born again (cf. Jn.3:3, 5). (CC)

restrained myself. See 63:15; 64:12. The Hebrew verb is also used of Joseph, who controlled his emotions while he tested his brothers (Ge 43:31; 45:1). (CSB)

woman in labor – This is an appropriate image because it foreshadows the incarnation of the long-promised Messiah, who will come to save his people from their sins. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

In battle with His enemies, God is cast in the role of a mighty man of war (v 13). An even more daring comparison describes Him as a pregnant woman. (TLSB)

gasp and pant – When time of the delivery comes, a woman can cry out in desperation but cannot delay the birth of her child. Though He restrained Himself for a long time, nothing can prevent the Lord from keeping His promise to open the way of forgiveness for fallen humankind. (TLSB)

The six finite verbs in 42:14, the first five of which are asyndetic (not connected by a conjunction), make Yahweh's statements emphatic. To "shriek" like a woman in labor accents the great emotion of Yahweh's love for his people. Here is a God who rejects every form of stoic restraint. He will resort to almost anything to bring Israel back to himself. And he will be successful. Unlike earlier texts in Isaiah where the birthing process is marked by failure (e.g., 26:18; 37:3), Yahweh's newly begotten people will be free (cf. Jn. 8:36). (CC)

Galatians 4:4-5, "But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem the those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."

42:15 *lay waste ... dry up*. The opposite of 35:1-2; 41:18. (CSB)

Isaiah announces that Yahweh desiccates vegetation (40:7) and dries up the dee and withers the rivers (44:27; cf. also 50:2; 51:10). Yahweh manages creation for his purpose of redemption, which will allow the exiles in Babylon to return home. (CC)

Both ideas relate to God's control over the waters of the Red Sea (Exodus 14-15). Israel crossed on dry land, but then Yahweh blew with his Spirit, and the waters covered Pharaoh and his army (Ex. 15:10). (CC)

God is moving everything that tempts our trust, so we must return and rely on the Lord and his righteousness. The mountains, hills, and high fortresses are not where we should place our confidence. The areas we cultivate are not under our control. Our nourishment comes from the Lord. He quenches our thirst, even as he did the thirst of the children of Israel in the desert. We today are not to put our trust in our surroundings either as we are reminded by floods, tornadoes, earthquakes, ice storms and the like. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

rivers into islands. † See 37:25; 44:27. (CSB)

Not an act of destruction. The Lord is leading the blind, so He removes all obstacles for such people. (TLSB)

42:16 *blind*. Israel (vv. 19-20). (CSB)

The theme of radical change continues, moving from nature to people. The powerful acts of verse 15 are in the service of the rescue of verse 16. Needing salvation are those who are blind; only as God turns darkness to light can they see and walk. This takes us back to the birthing image in 42:14. Infants leave the womb of darkness and begin living in the light of day. Just so, when the exiles leave Babylon, Israel will, in a national sense, be born again. What has been gestating for seventy years will burst forth. This is the "new thing" Yahweh is doing (43:19). In Christ, the rebirth of a new creation comes already now through God's Word and Sacraments (Jn. 3:3-8; 1

Cor. 5:7; Gal. 6:15; Titus 3:5-6), and on a cosmic scale, after Christ returns, God will inaugurate the new heavens and new earth (Is. 65:17-25; Rev. 21-22). (CC)

These are the spiritually blind who by themselves cannot find a way. God will find a way to bring them safely to Himself. God will guide them. God will turn darkness into light. God does all this. (PBC)

way that they do not know. Way of salvation from sin. (TLSB)

The theme of the “way” is prominent in chapters 40-55. It first appears in 40:3, where a voice is called to prepare a way for Yahweh. God knows the way of understanding (40:14), while in 44:3:16 and 43:19, the way is likened to the path Yahweh made for Israel to pass through the Red Sea and travel safely in the desert. For this new exodus/land conquest, Yahweh will first employ a pagan king named Cyrus (44:28; 45:1), then a Servant who be rejected, killed, and rise again (52:13-53:12). God’s ways are not our ways (55:8). (CC)

Psalm 32:8: “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.”

Psalm 119:105, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”

2 Peter 1:19, “And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

rough places into level ground. I will not lead them on twisting and winding roads, but on a straight and level way. Only believe. I will guide you to the end on a straight course. If you want to follow your own ideas, your way will be nothing but curves. One idea will follow another. Follow Me; I will put a lantern in place of the darkness, a straight path instead of the crooked. This is what I will do and nothing else. Therefore commit the business to Me in all articles of faith.” Leave your reason and wisdom behind and cling to the Word and the seeing God, who will bring you through on an unknown way. The world does not do this. The people of the world open their eyes wide and would like to have 20 eyes. For them everything depends on their own resources. (Luther)

not forsake. Cf. 40:27; 49:14; 54:8. (CSB)

God had delivered His people from Egypt, He would deliver them from Babylon, and He would deliver them from the bondage of sin by the coming of this Servant, Jesus Christ. (PBC)

42:17 THOSE WHO TRUST IN IDOLS – Despite God’s care and power, idolatry will continue among those who reject the Lord and His Servant. (TLSB)

Some off the deportees must have thought, “Yahweh has left us! We will never be saved!” Such fears were groundless. It is as though Yahweh responds, “If you are looking for an absent god who is unable to rescue, do not look at me; look at Babylon gods! They are the ones who are fakes and frauds!” The empire will be brought to its knees because it trusted in false and phony deities (Is. 46-47). Idolaters will also be brought to shame, which is like becoming nothing (cf. 41:11-12). Why would any of God’s people want to join this losing team. (CC)

are turned back – This can and does happen to God’s people who turn their back on him. Saul was the prime example.

This is the opposite of faith. Those who believe are blind. Just let anyone try to harm them! But the seeing people, who by their own wisdom choose gods for themselves, shall be turned back and put to shame. Thus everything happens contrary to expectation. As for you, just continue on your way with eyes closed. The seeing ones will slide backwards in all their plans and will be put to shame. Who are they? Those who put their trust in their own gods. The prophet has the idols of his own time in view, because the Jews stubbornly clung to their idols, each set up his refuge in his own interest. (Luther)

42:10–17 Through the work of the Lord’s Servant, the song of salvation reaches all people. Because you have received the Gospel, open your mouth to confess and to sing about Jesus’ works—both His Law and His Gospel. He will lead you and never forsake you. • O Savior, open my lips, that I may declare Your praise to those near and far. Lead me in the way of peace. Amen. (CC)

Israel's Failure to Hear and See

18 Hear, you deaf, and look, you blind, that you may see! 19 Who is blind but my servant, or deaf as my messenger whom I send? Who is blind as my dedicated one, or blind as the servant of the LORD? 20 He sees many things, but does not observe them; his ears are open, but he does not hear. 21 The LORD was pleased, for his righteousness' sake, to magnify his law and make it glorious. 22 But this is a people plundered and looted; they are all of them trapped in holes and hidden in prisons; they have become plunder with none to rescue, spoil with none to say, “Restore!” 23 Who among you will give ear to this, will attend and listen for the time to come? 24 Who gave up Jacob to the looter, and Israel to the plunderers? Was it not the LORD, against whom we have sinned, in whose ways they would not walk, and whose law they would not obey? 25 So he poured on him the heat of his anger and the might of battle; it set him on fire all around, but he did not understand; it burned him up, but he did not take it to heart.

42:18-20 Whereas the previous Servant (vv 1–9) did the work of the Lord, this one (Israel, v 24) does not. This description recalls Isaiah’s commission (6:9–13). (TLSB)

42:18 *deaf... blind.* Yahweh has disputed with idol worshipers (41:1-7) and with the idols themselves (41:21-29). Now he disputes with his own idolatrous people. His condemning words are prompted by the depiction of idolatry in 42:17, as well as by Israel’s complaint in 40:27. In light of these earlier verses, Yahweh responds by asserting this truth: “deaf,” “blind,” and “heartless” do not describe him but Israel. He heard and saw his people in Egyptian slavery and acted (Ex. 2:24-25). Now he promises to respond again, this time during the Babylonian crisis. Why can’t Israel hear and see this? Is the ominous judgment of 6:9-10 still in force. Yes, at least to some extent. Israel had a hard heart before the exile (6:9), just as the people will after the exile (42:18-21; 43:8-9), and after they return to the land (63:17). Having unresponsive hearts to God is a constant danger for God’s people at all times. (CC)

You are deaf because you do not hear the Word of God, and you are blind because you look around with your own ideas.” (Luther)

42:19 *who is blind?* “Who is blind but...?” The brutal Babylonians, right? The egocentric Egyptians right? The polytheistic Persians, that’s it, right? Wrong, wrong, wrong. Who is blind but my servant? (CC)

my servant. Israel. See note on 41:8–9. (CSB)

Hold on! In Is. 41:8 Yahweh reassures his people with the words “But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen.” And in 42:1-4, the servant is tasked with bringing Yahweh’s verdict against the idol-worshipping nations. How did the servant people begin with such a holy vocation and end blind in such abject idolatry? (CC)

Idols have a magnetism that attracted many of the Israelites into abandoning Yahweh, especially those exiled in Babylon. This resulted in the nation’s double bondage. They would be captive politically to Babylon and spiritually to false gods. Israel then needed a double salvation. To free them from Babylon Yahweh provides Cyrus. To free them from sin, he gives them and the world a new Servant. (CC)

Since Babylonian deities are a farce (44:9-20) and servant Israel is blind and deaf, the only hope is in Yahweh and his true Servant, who is appointed in 49:1-6 (cf. 42:1-4). Is. 49:5-6 differentiates this Servant from the idolatrous servant Israel. “Is it too light a thing that you should be my Servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the one Israel being spared?” (49:6). The Suffering Servant will restore the blind and deaf servant because the blind cannot lead the blind (cf. Lk. 6:39), neither can the deaf hear Yahweh’s voice, nor those imprisoned (Is. 42:22) free themselves. Israel broke the Sinaitic covenant, but the Servant himself is a new covenant for the people (49:8; cf. 42:6). We call this grace amazing! (CC)

Isaiah gives us two servants: the first one, Israel, is in need of rescue, while the second one is the Rescuer. After the Righteous Servant’s vicarious satisfaction for the servant’s sin as well as for the sins of all, his are forensically deemed righteous by Yahweh and become his “servants” (53:11; 54:17). Forgiven and cleansed by the grace of the Servant, God’s people are then able to take up the role of servants anew (Is. 56:6; 65:8-15; 66:14; Lk. 12:37; Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 12:5; Eph. 6:7). (CC)

Just like Israel, the disciples are blind to the mission of Jesus until he opens their eyes (e.g., Lk. 24:31, 32:45). With outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2) and with eyes wide open, they are empowered to take the Gospel “to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The same movement, from blindness to sight to mission also becomes Paul’s experience (Acts 9:8-18). (CC)

Those leaders, teachers, and priests who were entrusted with the message of salvation did not understand it. Therefore, they did not spread the Gospel truth to those entrusted to them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

messenger whom I send. A term associated with prophets (see Hag 1:13; cf. Isa 44:26; Mal 3:1). (CSB)

42:20 *sees many things...does not observe* – The Lord displayed mighty acts, especially acts of deliverance in great number before the eyes of His chosen people. But Israel saw what was done but failed actually to take note of what it meant. (Leupold)

42:21 In 42:18-20, Yahweh speaks directly to his deaf and blind servant nation. During most of the rest of the chapter, he speaks about Israel in the third person since the people have refused to listen. Is 42:21 concludes 42:18-20. Even if Israel is blind and deaf, Yahweh will still bring about his purposes. (CC)

his righteousness – For the sake of his righteousness (cf. 48:11), he plans to continue to magnify his teaching and make it glorious. Yahweh will create so great a revelation that all nations will stream to Zion (2:1-3; cf. Deut. 4:5-8; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 14:1). (CC)

magnify his law...glorious. Especially the law of Moses, given in the awesome setting of Mount Sinai (see Ex 34:29). (CSB)

Israel had no excuse for its failure to perform its assigned service; it knew God's will (Lk 12:47). (TLSB)

42:22 *plundered and looted.* By the Assyrians (see 10:6 and note) and the Babylonians (see 39:6). (CSB)

Because if Israel's unbelief, they were allowed to be plundered and looted by these very nations. (TLSB)

This is Moses' own people, exposed to robbers and ungodly teachers. Those, however, who cling to Christ will not easily err but will remain on target, Christ. If we should lose this target, an endless string of errors would result, as we experienced under the papacy. We were as sheep without a shepherd, exposed to all kinds of robbers. Whatever was taught, that we accepted. (Luther)

42:23 *whom among you will give ear* – This is an admonition. Here the prophet is burning with extreme zeal because man is so vile that he voluntarily disdains to accept the offered grace. To this grace we should run in mortal danger. Yet now, when it is offered to us for a resting place, we neglect it. Therefore he says *Who among you, etc.* "Oh, the day will come when you will understand!" Therefore the prophet in his calling anticipates and tells the people what will happen to them. (Luther)

42:24 This situation for Israel was not caused by the Babylonians. The Lord caused this because Israel had sinned. (TLSB)

Who gave up Jacob. Babylon conquered Israel, not because their gods were stronger than the Lord (see 40:17–18; 1Ki 20:23), but because the Lord was punishing his people. (CSB)

42:25 *him.* Israel. (TLSB)

poured out ... anger. Israel had a foretaste of the day of the Lord. (CSB)

The violence of war was one of the ways God poured out His judgment. God's blind and deaf people would feel the fury of the Babylon conquerors. Their city would be burned in flames because of their sins. Sadly, in the midst of that great judgment, they still would not understand that their troubles came from God as a result of their sins. (PBC)

set him on fire. Even when besieged, the people did not repent. (CSB)

42:18–25 Israel fails to believe and live as God's servant, and is punished with exile. No person should seek security in his own righteousness, for we are delivered for the sake of the Lord's righteousness alone. He calls us and delivers us according to His righteous purposes. • Open my eyes! Unstuff my ears, O Jesus! Magnify Your Word in my seeing and hearing, that I may serve You in righteousness. Amen. (TLSB)