



Behold, My Servant

Matthew 12:15-21

1. Jesus is Great! (verse 18)

2. Jesus is Gentle! (verses 19-20)

Our Only Hope is in Him! (verse 21)

Matthew 12:15-21

But Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed Him, and He healed them all, and warned them not to make Him known, in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, might be fulfilled, saying, "BEHOLD, MY SERVANT WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN; MY BELOVED IN WHOM MY SOUL is WELL-PLEASED; I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM, AND HE SHALL PROCLAIM JUSTICE TO THE GENTILES. HE WILL NOT QUARREL, NOR CRY OUT; NOR WILL ANYONE HEAR HIS VOICE IN THE STREETS. A BATTERED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK OFF, AND A SMOLDERING WICK HE WILL NOT PUT OUT, UNTIL HE LEADS JUSTICE TO VICTORY. AND IN HIS NAME THE GENTILES WILL HOPE."

We stand at a great disadvantage of being able to fully grasp the impact that these verses would have had upon Matthew's original readers. When we think of Jesus, the Messiah, we instantly think of the cross and Jesus suffering there. We think of Jesus coming to die. A little further back in our minds is the thought of Jesus, seated at the right hand of God. Perhaps you can throw in there the thought of Him coming, ruling and reigning. When we put all of these things together, we get a picture of God's plan for this world. We understand that the Messiah would come twice: once to suffer, and once to rule and reign.

Yet, when the Jews of Jesus' day thought of Messiah, they thought of only one thing: A coming and reigning and ruling king! They didn't think much of a humble, suffering Messiah. So far, Matthew has not written much that would change this perspective. Matthew has been describing to us of how Jesus was a king. He was born of the kingly line of David (Matthew 1). He was even identified as a king in his infancy by the wise men (Matthew 2). When Jesus began to preach, He proclaimed the nearness of the kingdom of God (Matthew 4). When Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, He was presenting a new order of living, appropriate for a new kingdom (Matthew 5-7). His many miracles demonstrated His power and authority as King (Matthew 8-9). He sent His disciples out to preach the nearness of the kingdom (Matthew 10). There is this anticipation building with Jesus and His anticipated Kingdom, which was to arrive on the scene. So, when the Jews would see Jesus, who claimed to be Messiah, retreating from the religious leaders, there would begin to be doubt in their minds as to the validity of Jesus' claims. Also, when they saw Jesus rejected by so many people, their doubts would have doubled.

For the last several weeks, we have seen reasons for the people to doubt Jesus. The religious leaders resisted the ministry of Jesus Christ. Considering the vast influence that the religious leaders had, this is a major reason for people to doubt Jesus. If you go further back into chapter 11, you will remember that the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum rejected Jesus as well. In fact, this is the theme that runs through these chapters: resistance and rejection. Next week, we will see the same theme continue when the Pharisees accuse Jesus of casting out demons by Beelzebul.

If we were in Israel during this time, we would not be too excited about the prospects of Jesus' ministry. You would know that if the Pharisees were against you, you were in deep trouble. The Pharisees held much power and influence, and Jesus was on their bad list. If you read the account of Jesus healing the man born blind in John 9, you will get a sense of the power that these Pharisees held. At one point, the Pharisees came to the blind man's parents and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?" (John 9:19). But they answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he shall speak for himself" (John 9:21). They knew of how Jesus came and healed their son. But, they were afraid of the power of the Pharisees. To speak anything positive of Jesus would draw certain public shame. John tells us, "His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed, that if anyone should confess Him to be Christ [i.e. Messiah], he should be put out of the synagogue" (John 9:22). We read last week in verse 14, that "the Pharisees went out, and counseled together against Him, as to how they might destroy Him." Verse 15 continues, "But Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there."

The Jew who thought that Jesus was the Messiah would have been surprised by these circumstances. The Messiah was supposed to come and conquer. But, this wasn't taking place. He was being resisted. He was being rejected. Rather than ruling and reigning, Jesus was retreating. People usually retreat when they are losing. To the world it may seem that Jesus is losing, But this was God's plan. It hasn't caught Jesus by surprise. In chapter 10, Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." (Matt. 10:34). Jesus said that his disciples, "will be hated by all on account of my name" (Matt. 10:22). Jesus knew that He would be resisted and rejected. There were many times when Jesus withdrew. When John had been taken into custody, and there was political danger in the air, He withdrew to Galilee (4:12; 14:13). There was a time in which He took His disciples up north to Tyre and Sidon (Matt. 15:21). When Jesus was in danger, He protected Himself by going away to someplace safe. He certainly could have boldly confronted the Pharisees and established His kingdom by force. But it was not the right time for that. He had come to die. And when His appointed hour came for Him to die, he would face His enemies boldly and willingly. However, Jesus was still a year or two away from the cross. His hour

had not yet arrived. So, Jesus withdrew.

But, He didn't withdraw into seclusion alone. In fact, we read in the second half of verse 15 that "many followed Him, and He healed them all." Far from hiding, Jesus continued His healing ministry. He was healing all who came to him. We have seen this before. Matthew 4:23 says, "Jesus was going about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness among the people." Matthew 8:16 says, "they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill." Matthew 9:35 says, "Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness."

When Jesus walked the earth, he literally banished sickness from His presence. He was the physician who healed all diseases. Never did a person leave His presence sick. So, even in His withdrawal, Jesus never lost any power. It wasn't because of His weakness that He withdrew. It wasn't because He was weak and the Pharisees were so strong. He had another purpose. This purpose is made clear in our text. For Matthew's original readers, those verses would have come like rejuvenating water from the spring. Jesus had to fulfill Scripture. The Scripture that He had to fulfill dealt with the servant-like quality of Messiah. The Scripture that Jesus fulfilled was one of the well-known "servant-songs" in Isaiah. There are several prophecies about the suffering "servant of the Lord" (Is. 42:1-4; 49:1-9; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). These prophecies come from Isaiah who predicted the suffering Messiah. Matthew quotes one of the songs from Isaiah 42:1-3. This is where the impact of these verses comes. Matthew reminds his readers that this is what the character of the Messiah would be. He wasn't going to be a flashy, charismatic diplomat, who would wage war and bargain for peace. Rather, the Messiah was going to be a man of unassuming character. He wasn't going to go and blow His own horn and say, "Hey, look at Me! I'm something special!" Rather, the Messiah was going to be quiet and unassuming and gentle. Isaiah 53:2 said, "He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him." This is why Jesus "warned [those whom He healed] not to make Him known" (Matt. 12:16). In His ministry, Jesus took on the character of the "servant of the Lord," as Isaiah had prophesied 700 years earlier. Jesus had to "fulfill" Isaiah's words (Matt. 12:17), which speak of a humble, gentle, quiet, submissive servant.

I have just set the table for us. We are about to feast on Jesus Christ. The Psalmist says, "O taste and see that the LORD is good;" We will taste this morning of Jesus Christ! Last week we spent some time with Kishwaukee Bible Church, as they celebrated their 10th anniversary. It was genuine joy for us to see what we helped start 10 years ago and how God has prospered the work greatly. While we were there, I tasted some cake. This cake was some of the best tasting cake I have ever had. I took a piece of this chocolate cake which was saturated with strawberries. It was moist and succulent. It had perhaps a hint of rum. It was so good that I had a second piece. It was so good that I brought a piece for Yvonne. You probably don't know this but Yvonne doesn't care much for cake. She has made so many cakes over the years for so many occasions that she has no appetite for cake. This cake was so tasty that Yvonne actually ate this cake and said it was good. This morning, we are not serving cake. We are serving Jesus Christ. Verses 18-20 are all about Jesus. My aim this morning is that you would taste of Him and find Him sweet and satisfying. My prayer for you is that you would leave this place this morning stuffed in your stomach with Jesus.

1. Jesus is Great! (verse 18)

My first point this morning is that Jesus is great. I want to show you how great Jesus was. In verse 18, we see God speaking about Jesus. When God speaks about Jesus, He speaks like a proud parent. He speaks highly of Him. He gives Him praise! He bestows honor upon Him. Have you ever heard proud parents speak about their child? You hear about their grades or their athletic ability or their musical ability. You hear about their accomplishments, skills, and talents. It seems as if their child can do no wrong. If you didn't know any better, you would think that their child is the next Leonardo DaVinci! In this case before us this morning, the Child is Jesus Christ. There is something special about Him. Jesus is great! It is only appropriate for God the Father to praise God the Son. Proverbs 27:2 says, "Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; A stranger, and not your own lips." God gives 6 praises of Jesus.

Praise 1 - "My Servant"

God praises Jesus by calling him his servant. God says, in verse 18, "Behold, My Servant." What makes a good servant? The good servant is the one who does the will of his master at all times! The good servant is the one who looks to the hand of his master, ready to do his will (Ps. 123:2). The good servant says to his master, "What do you want, O master. Just say the word, and consider it done." Jesus was God's servant. Jesus was a good servant. Jesus was completely in submission to the Father. Whatever God told Him to do, that He did. He was resolved to do it, whatever the cost. At one point, Jesus said to His disciples, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work" (John 4:34). In the garden, this was difficult for Him. In blood-sweat agony, He prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). God's will for Jesus was that He would come and suffer and die upon the cross. As the obedient servant, Jesus submitted to His Father's will. When you think of these things, Phil. 2 comes to mind,

"although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (Phil. 2:6-8)

Jesus was God's servant. Paul said, "Have this attitude in yourselves" (Phil. 2:5).

"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others." (Phil. 2:3-4)

This is our example. We are to consider Jesus and have His submissive attitude to God in everything. Jesus was great because He served. You are great when you humble yourself and serve others.

Praise 2 - "My Chosen"

God also called Jesus, "My Chosen". God has His chosen people who are identified as the elect (or, the chosen). There are myriads of them. Before the foundation of the world, God chose those whom He would draw to Himself. Jesus said, "No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44). Many of us here in this room know of God's electing love which has been poured out upon us in Christ Jesus, as God drew us to Himself. But when God uses this phrase to describe Jesus, the focus is upon the single, special character of Jesus. Jesus is different than all of us. Jesus is not one of the elect; He is the chosen One. He is God's specifically selected servant. The point is that God is the one choosing Jesus. Jesus didn't take honor to Himself. It was God who called Him and sent Him and gave Him honor. In 1 Peter 2:4, Jesus is called, the "choice and precious" stone. The cornerstone is the stone of honor. It is the stone upon which everything is founded. Paul writes that the church is founded upon Jesus Christ. Yet, this stone was "rejected by men." There was a point when Jesus was upon the cross and the people looking on were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One" (Luke 23:35). But, listen, in God's eyes, Jesus is God's chosen servant, despite how the world received Him.

We ought to find tremendous comfort for ourselves in this. If the chosen and Holy One was hated by men, but loved by God, so too will we be loved by God, despite what others think of us. In fact, they hated our master. They will hate us (John 15:18). We are aliens and strangers in this world (1 Pet. 2:11). Jesus told His disciples, "I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:19).

Praise 3 - "My Beloved"

God calls Jesus, "My Beloved". Again, the emphasis here is upon the unique place of Jesus in God's heart. "Beloved" simply means "loved one." God loved Jesus, His Son. Here we see God calling Jesus, "My loved one." Jesus was the one above all others that was loved by the Father. You who have children know especially what this means. Your children are very precious to you and very dear to you. They will always be your children. You will always love them very much. You will go to great lengths to help your children. There is application for us. Every child of God is loved by God. John wrote, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). Paul wrote, "God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). God's love is demonstrated to us in the sacrifice of His Son. In this, you ought to glory and rejoice. God has demonstrated the extent of His love for us in giving His Son to appease His wrath that was due to us.

But, God's love for Jesus was different. There was no need to atone for the sins of Jesus. Jesus always did the will of the Father. Jesus never offended the Father in any way. There was never a barrier between them. There was perfect harmony between them from eternity past to eternity future. Jesus spoke about having glory with the Father before time began (John 17:5). John tells us that they enjoyed perfect fellowship with each other, "face to face" as two lovers, who gaze into one another's eyes (John 1:1). This is the eternal love among the Trinity. It is a perfect love. This is God's love for His Son. If God loves Jesus with this intense love, ought you to love Him as well?

Praise 4 - "My Pleasure"

God calls Jesus, "My Pleasure". I take this from the next phrase of verse 18, "in Whom My soul is well pleased." There were two occasions in which God gave this same testimony concerning Jesus. Voices from heaven affirmed the Father's pleasure in His Son. Perhaps you remember when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. John dunked Him in the water and "after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, ... and behold, a voice out of the heavens [said], 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased'" (Matt. 3:17). By a miracle, a voice from heaven, God affirmed His love for and His satisfaction with Jesus, His Son. There was another occasion in which God gave a similar testimony. Jesus went up to a high mountain with Peter, James, and John. Upon the mountain, "He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun and His garments became as white as light" (Matt. 17:2). Moses and Elijah appeared to them all and had a brief conversation with Jesus. They were talking about His upcoming death in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). Then, the voice came from a bright cloud that had come and overshadowed them, saying, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him" (Matt. 17:5). God was totally satisfied with Jesus. God was satisfy with who Jesus was and what Jesus did. God was entirely well-pleased with Jesus.

When it comes to you and your life, the only way that God will ever be well-pleased with you is when you are in Christ. Apart from Christ, God is not well-pleased with you. Your sin is an offense before God. If a voice from heaven would come upon Steve Brandon apart from Christ, it would say, "This is Steve Brandon, he has transgressed my ways. I am not pleased with him." Yet, as by faith I take hold of the righteousness of Christ, the voice from heaven will say, "This is Steve Brandon, he has been found pure in my Son. I am pleased with Steve." God's pleasure of Jesus is entirely different than God's pleasure of your life. Jesus pleased God based upon merit. You please God based upon faith in the merit of His Son.

Praise 5 - "My Anointed"

God calls Jesus, "My Anointed". God said through Isaiah, "I will put My Spirit upon Him." At the baptism of Jesus the Spirit came upon Him, like a dove (Matt. 3:16). Shortly afterwards, Jesus preached in the synagogue at Nazareth, proclaiming, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor" (Luke 4:18). Peter said, "God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and power" (Acts 10:38). This was God's love and favor toward His Son: He anointed Him with His Spirit. Jesus did miraculous things because He was God. He was anointed by God. He was favored of God. This is Jesus.

Earlier in the service, I read from Psalm 2, "The rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed" (Psalm 2:2). This is similar to our passage! In verse 15, we see the religious rulers taking counsel together! They are taking counsel against Jesus, the Messiah. In fact, the word translated "Anointed" in Psalm 2:2 is the word, "Messiah!" God anointed Jesus with the Spirit and declared Him to be Messiah!

All believers in Jesus Christ have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. In Jesus, this anointing produced power. In us, this anointing produces an understanding of Christ. John tells us that "you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know" (1 John 2:20). He continues, "I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do now it, and because no lie is of the truth" (1 John 2:21). In us, the Spirit teaches us. "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God" (1 Cor. 2:12). In us, the Spirit produces righteous living. The fruit of the Spirit is "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, [and] self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23). Is the Holy Spirit upon you? Has the Spirit taught you of Jesus? Do you

understand the truth of Christ? This is the result of the Spirit coming upon us. Do you see the effect of the Holy Spirit in your life, producing loving, joyful, and peaceful attitudes toward one another?

Praise 6 - "My Proclaimer"

God calls Jesus, "My Proclaimer". The last phrase in verse 18 reads, "And He shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles." You could easily translate this, "He shall proclaim justice to the nations" (as the NIV does). We often think that the ministry of Jesus was only to the Jews. Certainly, it was focused there. But, it also extended to the Gentiles as well. Jesus healed the centurion's servant. The centurion wasn't a Jew (Matt. 8:5). When Jesus healed the demon possessed men of Gadara, they weren't Jews (Matt. 8:28). Jesus had mercy upon the daughter of the gentile woman from Syrochana (Matt. 15:22). Yet, the gospel of Jesus Christ has extended far and wide. It has extended to the nations. Rock Valley Bible Church stands as a testimony to this today. This shows how great Jesus is!

Though Jesus withdrew from the mounting persecution which has come upon Him at the hands of the Pharisees, He never stepped out of God's favor. This is the point of the passage. For those expecting a ruling and conquering Messiah, the sight of a withdrawn, humble servant would have caused them concern. But no concern ought to be expressed. God was fully satisfied with Jesus Christ. He had pronounced His anointing upon Him. He had announced His pleasure with Him. He had proclaimed His unfailing love for His Son.

Perhaps even today you might be ashamed of Christ for one reason or another. He appears distant. He appears irrelevant to many of life's problems today. He is ridiculed by many today. But know that as God was fully with Jesus in His relative obscurity while upon the earth, God is fully with Jesus today. Today, He has the highest seat of honor in the Universe. He sits at the right hand of God! We are in the same boat as those to whom Peter wrote, "Though you have not seen Him, ... and though you do not see Him now," you should "love Him and ... believe in Him" (1 Pet. 1:8). When Jesus withdrew from the Pharisees for a season, it was God's plan. As Jesus sits enthroned in the heavens, it is God's plan. For those who watched Jesus withdraw, in only a few short years, the day would come in which He would conquer sin, by freely offering Himself upon the cross. For us who have believed in Christ, though we haven't seen Him in all of His glory, there will be a day when He will come and establish His kingdom fully upon the earth. We ought never to be ashamed of one so great! John Piper has written a book entitled, "Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ." This is what our text is about this morning. Have you tasted of Jesus this morning? Are you ready for a second course?

2. Jesus is Gentle! (verses 19-20)

Verse 19 reads, "He will not quarrel, nor cry out; nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets."

a) In His Coming

Jesus was gentle in His coming. These verses are at the heart of the fulfillment that Isaiah was seeking. Jesus was a king. Verse 18 describes Him as the most privileged of anyone ever to walk the earth. Jesus is great and highly favored of God. John Piper has described this well, "He has absolute authority over every creature. If any ruler ever had a right to reclaim his own kingdom by force of arms and battle shouts it was Jesus Christ." (John Piper, April 15, 1984).

Yet, when Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit, He didn't come and take His kingdom by force. He could have, but He chose not to. Instead, He chose the gentle route. Proverbs 15:1 says, "A gentle answer turns away wrath." When Jesus came the first time, it was in a spirit of gentleness. He was seeking to persuade through love and compassion. Jesus told Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).

In the first 300 years of its existence, the kingdom of Christ exploded! But it didn't do it through force. It did it through humble submission to Jesus Christ. Jesus was the great example. In these first 300 years, it faced seemingly insurmountable challenges. (1) It was illegal. Many Christians were martyred because of their faith in Christ. At first glance, this would seem to stop the movement, when you kill its most devoted and committed members. Yet, the church continued in triumph. (2) The message of the gospel isn't attractive to selfish people. The gospel is a message of dying to self and to the world. People don't like to hear this message. You can fill stadiums with people who love to watch a football game. But just try filling a stadium with the message of self-denial and faith in another. (3) It was the lowly in the world who became followers. It was the poor and the obscure people who embraced Christ, not the rich and wealthy classes. In the mid 2nd century, Celsus scoffed at the Christians who were mostly "weavers, cobblers, and fullers, the most illiterate persons." He called Christianity an "irrational faith" to which was focused on "women and children." (See Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Volume 2, p. 14). Despite the opposition, the church conquered. It continued in triumph! Not through military might, but through love and devotion to Jesus. The early church followed the example of Jesus. Jesus came quietly and meekly. Jesus didn't seek to draw attention to Himself. Jesus didn't cry out with a loud voice for all to hear. Rather, "Jesus ... withdrew" (verse 15).

Catch this: The path to greatness isn't to exert your own authority. The path to exaltation isn't to lift yourself up and boast of yourself. The path to being first in the kingdom isn't to jockey for position to get the highest seat. Rather, the path to greatness is to be a humble servant. Perhaps you remember the time when Jesus was at a feast. He noticed how everyone was seeking for the places of honor at the table. He said, ...

"When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, and he who invited you both shall come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place. But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you. For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted." (Luke 14:8-11)

Jesus was the perfect model of this. When Jesus walked the earth, He did so as a humble Man. He willingly placed His life as a sin offering.

Oh, there were times when the righteous anger of Jesus raged! He had the power to drive out all of the moneychangers from the temple, overturning their tables when zeal for the house of the Lord consumed Him (John 2:14-17). Jesus demonstrated His power by feeding thousands and healing all disease and sickness from Israel. But, as powerful as He was, He came in a meek and gentle spirit, not seeking to draw attention to Himself, just as Isaiah had prophesied that He would come. Jesus said,

"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:25-28)

His life is an example of the gentleness and humility that ought to be true in our lives as well. Jesus came with all the might and all the authority. Remember when Jesus was arrested? He could have called more than 12 legions of angels to help Him. But He didn't. Jesus came with all of the approval and blessing of God. God called him, "My Servant"; "My Chosen"; "My Beloved"; "My Pleasure"; "My Anointed"; and "My Proclaimer". Yet, He took the humble road and endured the cross (Heb. 12:2).

b) In His Patience

Jesus was also gentle in His patience. Verse 20 continues this same theme. We read,

"A battered reed He will not break off, and a smoldering wick He will not put out, until He leads justice to victory" (Matt. 12:20).

The way of the world is to come and conquer, while leaving the powerless to perish along the way. In war, the enemy comes to conquer and destroy, no prisoners taken. The complaint often surfaces when a big business comes and takes over a locally owned business is that they don't care for their employees anymore. Despite our antagonism and hatred toward the philosophy and all of the implications began by Charles Darwin, he did get some things right. Survival of the fittest is often a reality. It the strongest who get their way. They don't care about the little guy. But, this isn't the case with Jesus. Jesus is gentle and cares for the downcast. Jesus "did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt. 9:13). And when a sinner is broken and downcast, Jesus is careful not to crush such a one.

Isaiah told us that the Messiah would not break off a battered reed. The picture that is used is that of a plant that has been beaten and battered. A reed often grows in the marshlands, where there is much water. It can be bruised in several ways. Picture a duck, coming down for a landing in the water, getting too close to the reeds on the way down, damaging one. Picture the wind during hurricane Isabel, damaging the growing reeds. Picture a hunting dog, sniffing out the ducks in the reeds. Once a reed is bruised, it won't stand up again. It is totally useless. What used to stand as protection for the ducks, now falls limp into the water. Such is the picture of many believers. They have faced the battles of the world, and lost. They have sought to stand courageous and proclaim the gospel boldly, but have been timid. They have tried and tried and tried to conquer some specific sin, but it continues to beat them down. As great as Jesus is, He is gentle to make sure that the reed doesn't snap in two. He gently takes the reed and seeks to see it mended. It isn't cast off by Jesus. It is helped. Perhaps this is you this morning. Sin has continued to haunt your soul. You plead and plead to Jesus for help. But, it lurks behind the corner. Just as soon as you think that you have mastered it, up comes another strong wind and it knocks you over. Know that Jesus is a gentle King. He will be patient with you. He won't simply discard you.

Isaiah also tells us that the smoldering wick will not be put out. Picture a lamp that has been set to light the room. Now, if the oil is dry, or the wick is short, the flame is not much. In fact, it's more smoke than it is flame. It is stinking up the place rather than lighting up the place. The easiest thing to do would be to blow it out and get a new wick and start over. But Jesus doesn't do that. He takes the smoldering wick and nurses it along. He blows on it to get more oxygen to the flame. He puts more oil in the lamp. He adjusts the location of the wick, shields it from the wind. He gets it burning again. It is the picture of the believer who is losing his flame. Rather than putting the flame out, Jesus is patient. Jesus encourages the flame to ignite. Like Paul, Jesus says, "kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you" (2 Tim. 1:6). Stir it up! Keep on!

There are many in the church that often get dumped. I have seen it. Sinners in the church are despised! People often say, "I can't believe that he turned to drinking again!" Or, they think, "I thought that she had conquered that sin. Well, I guess that she'll never change!" Or, they condemn, "They can't keep up with Bible reading! What use are they?" To those not coming every Sunday, the attitude is often, "They're not committed to be here every Sunday! What sort of Christians do they think that they are?" Then when they do arrive, they are despised and looked down upon. Rock Valley Bible Church ought to be a place where repentant sinners feel welcomed. Those sinners who are smoldering and need fanning should find that Rock Valley Bible Church will be there to help them. Who fans them? The church! "Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near" (Heb. 10:24, 25). When struggling sinners are looked down upon, those struggling in sin stay away from the church, rather than coming to the church where the wick will be helped to burn. These are smoldering wicks that need fanning.

Christ is **patient**. He doesn't put out the smoldering wick! Jesus has the final victory in mind: "Until He leads justice to victory." The victory came on the cross. But, we await the final victory when Christ will return again! And come, He will. He will be victorious. If finish with one last admonition...

Our Only Hope is in Him! (verse 21)

This is very simple. Verse 21, "In His name the Gentiles will hope." Isaiah is talking about us! We are in the Bible! We who hope in Christ are in the Bible! Jesus is your only hope. Yesterday in Men's Equippers, we were looking at Peter's response to the Jewish leaders who had arrested him for preaching the resurrection from the dead (Acts 4:3). Peter said, "There is no other name under heaven that has been given

among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Jesus is the only way to God. There is no other. The only way is to renounce your sins and confess them and embrace Christ for all that He is in all of His fullness. It is only then that you will find peace and rest and joy and contentment in this life. It is only then that you will know the joys of your sins forgiven and of your burdens lifted. You may very well hope in your righteousness or your church attendance or your Bible reading or your morality. But such hope will fail you. Your only hope is in Jesus alone.

Recently, my son and I have been playing this computer game with each other. It is called, "Lego Racers." We race little Lego cars around this track. The screen is split in two. I am racing on top and he is racing on bottom. He almost always wins (which makes it fun for me). Along this track, there are floating Lego pieces called "power-ups." They empower you to do different things, such as shooting a bomb toward the car in front of you or leaving an oil slick behind your car to slow down your competition. One of the power-ups allows for you to "warp." When you "warp," your car goes very fast through the track and you can make up lost ground in a hurry when you "warp." Well, there are sometimes when we are racing that my only hope is to "warp" to catch up. It would be foolish for me to try to catch up by racing the course. I need a "warp." It is my only hope! So Jesus is your only hope! You need to trust in Him.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on September 21, 2003 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.
