

Dec. 7, 2014 – Isaiah 42:1-4 (OT: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 Epistle: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 Gospel: John 1:6-8, 19-27)

ISAIAH'S ROYAL PROPHECIES

III. This King Will Forth Justice with Mercy

Last week we looked the prophecy found in Isaiah 11:1-4 of the Branch from the root of Jesse. It showed us that this coming King brings forth justice. This week we turn to Isaiah 42:1-4.

The words of Isaiah 42:1-4 remind us of what God said to us in chapter 11. God here again tells us that He will put His Spirit upon His Servant. In chapter 11 we had a description of that Spirit. He is *“The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord”* (Isaiah 11:2).

Here in Isaiah 42 God tells us again that His Elect One *“will bring forth justice to the Gentiles”* (v. 1). This is repeated in verse 3: *“He will bring forth justice for truth”* and verse 4 says that He will establish justice in the earth. This shows how import the justice that He brings really is. As we heard last week, He brings forth justice in you by taking away your sins through His death on the cross and by giving you His righteousness. He also gives you the Spirit of the Lord which was upon Him. This Spirit brings forth in you the knowledge of the Lord and produces in you the fear of the Lord. The Spirit gives you wisdom and understanding. We also heard how this King is coming again to bring forth justice for you by destroying all your enemies, even death.

While these themes are repeated here in chapter 42, God gives us more information and tells us *how* (that is, the manner in which) this coming King will do these things. He will bring forth justice with mercy.

We see this in verse 2: *“He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.”* This brings to mind Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, which was the fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9: *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey”* (see Matthew 21:4-5). Jesus did not come with great pomp and a large army to bring forth justice. It was just Jesus, riding on a donkey. He did not raise His voice or cry out. His voice was not heard in the streets.

What a contrast this is to a worldly conquerer. You probably have seen news reels of the Allied forces rolling into various cities to liberate them from the Axis powers at the end of World War II. They came with tanks and troops and a great show of strength. Footage showing only one person riding into a town, and that on a donkey, would have been left on the cutting room floor. But that is Jesus how came – lowly and riding on a donkey.

The Gospel of Matthew Chapter 12 records another way that Jesus fulfilled this prophecy. Jesus had just healed a man with a withered hand in a synagogue. The Pharisees there did not like the fact that Jesus had done this on the Sabbath, so they *“went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him. But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all. Yet He warned them not to make Him known,”* that this prophecy *“which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet”* might be fulfilled (Matthew 12:14-17, see vv.18-21).

So how was this a fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy? In the confrontation with the Pharisees in the synagogue Jesus did not raise His voice. He didn’t get into an argument with them. After speaking the truth and healing the man, He withdrew from the area because He knew they were

plotting to kill Him. And when He had withdrawn, He did not go about loudly proclaiming His miracles, but warned the people *“not to make Him known.”*

How different that is from us! How often have you gotten into an argument with someone? I know I can argue! We want to win and prove ourselves right and the other person wrong. We raise our voices and refuse to back down. But God tells us *“to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men”* (Titus 3:2).

That is a description of Jesus and how He dealt with people. It is a description of how He deals with us.

It is true that Jesus at times was angry at the hardness of the Pharisees’ hearts. In fact in Mark’s account of Jesus’ healing the man with the withered hands we are told: *“And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand’”* (Mark 3:5). Jesus was just in His anger. He was grieved that the religious leaders of His day had closed their hearts to Him and were leading people astray. But this anger did not bubble over into angry arguments. Jesus condemned their lack of faith (see, for example, Matthew 23), but He did it out of love for them and for those they would mislead. He did it with mercy.

Jesus withdrawing from the Pharisees shows another way in which Jesus brings forth justice with mercy. It says that multitudes followed Him. If you were trying to lay low and hide from the religious leaders who were trying to kill you, would you want large crowds swarming all over you and calling attention to where you were? Of course not! That would not be good! But what does Jesus do? He didn’t tell them to go away and leave Him alone. Rather, He *“healed them all”!*

This illustrates verse 3 of our prophecy: *“A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench.”* The people came to Jesus diseased and weak; they came to Him as bruised reeds and wicks that were just barely smoking. If Jesus had told them to go away, that probably would have broken and extinguished them for good. But again, that is not what Jesus did.

What a picture God gives us here through Isaiah! A reed that is bruised doesn’t recover. It is even more fragile that it was before. A strong wind will easily break it. The smoking flax refers to the wick of a lamp or candle. Have you ever had the wick of a candle that you are trying to put out start smoking? It fills the room with a stench so bad that you quickly try to put it out, perhaps by licking your fingers and squeezing the smoldering wick.

The bruised reed and smoking wick are pictures of us. We come to God irreparably bruised by sin – even more than bruised – dead in our trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). Our unrighteousness – our failure to keep God’s law perfectly – is like the stinky smoke rising from a smoldering wick. Jesus has every right and reason to cast us out – to break our bruised, dead reeds and throw them into the fire and to quench out our smoking wicks and get rid of us and our unrighteousness which offends Him.

But that is not what Jesus does. *“A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench.”* He is merciful to us and heals us. He has removed your sin by His death on the cross and creates in you a new heart. He fills you with the Holy Spirit who fans your faith into flame and makes you the light of the world. Jesus said, *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light”* (Matthew 11:28-30). We can come to Him because He brings forth justice with mercy.

We daily sin and fall short of the perfect life God requires. Think, for example, of the times you have failed to show mercy to someone else. While we may not actually “kick someone when

they are down”, we often delight when someone gets what we think they deserve. We have someone away with a insensitive word. And telling someone “I told you so” can be so satisfying. Unlike Jesus we have broken the bruised reed and quenched the smoking wick.

But Jesus’ mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23). They will not run out. Jesus continues to give you mercy, as verse 4 says: “*He will not fail nor be discouraged, Till He has established justice in the earth*”. Until He returns to finally conquer all our enemies and establish His justice on earth, His mercy will not fail.

If you sin, He calls you to come to Him and confess your sins. He is faithful and just to forgive you your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Because Jesus has brought forth justice by paying for our sins and satisfying God’s requirements in our place, we can “*come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need*” (Hebrews 4:16). “*A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench.*” Take comfort in these words!

Earthly rulers and governments often establish peace and justice without mercy. And we too often fail to show mercy to others. But Jesus, the King, brings true peace and true justice *with* mercy. He has mercy on us throughout all our days here on this earth, and we look forward to receiving mercy from Him on that day when He returns and establishes justice here in the earth. As we wait, we pray: “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” Amen.

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