

Date: 01/08/2012

Text: Isaiah 42:1-9

Title: Servant Song (2)

Theme: Since Jesus Christ is the servant Messiah, therefore those who serve in His kingdom are to model after Him.

Introduction:

Last week many eyes were upon the Iowa's Republican caucus. This week it will be New Hampshire. We have heard this sentiment expressed many times; "I like his policy, but I am not too sure about him as a person." Leadership skill is important, but in this country, we still put weight on who you are as a person.

Every year, on the second Sunday in January, we have a simple service to install the deacons and elders of HCC. On this day, we turn to God's word to see what we can learn about being a leader in HCC, in God's church. In our study of the scriptures, we noticed that there are few mentions of the so called leadership skills. Yet most of the passages is about what kind of a person a leader is.

By now, if you have been attending HCC regularly, you probably will, rightly so, associate leadership with servanthood. In the book of Isaiah, there are 4 chapters called the Servant Songs. They provide us with a snapshot of the Servant Messiah, Jesus Christ. Since in January, 2011, we studied one of these chapters: 49, so this morning's sermon title is Servant Messiah 2. This year, our ministry theme is Equipping the Leaders to Equip the saints, so from today and the next two Sundays, we will study the remaining 3 Servant Songs. As we serve in this and other churches, it is our desire to model after the Servant Messiah.

I. God's servant is under his watching eyes.

Vs.1, "[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.” A simple but poignant sentence. What an introduction to this servant Messiah! This being the election year, we will have an earful of candidates saying, I am so and so, I am not from Washington D.C. We see D.C. as a huge soy sauce jar; anyone who gets near it will be tainted. However, no matter how much of an outsider you are, it appears that the moment you are elected, you become one of them, you are tainted. Isn't it refreshing to hear that this servant belongs to God, chosen by God, sustained by God, that God delights in him and God's spirit is upon him? So, what does this mean to us?

We have to be careful not to equate ourselves with the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Yet, he has also invited us to learn from him. So, imagine, you and I, leaders in God's church, belonging to him, chosen by him, sustained by him, He is well pleased with us and his spirit is upon us. We don't even need to pray and ask that we belong to him; that he will sustain us and his spirit would come upon us, He's already here with us. These are God's endowment to us. We can respond in three ways:

First, thank God for choosing us, affirming that we belong to him, that his spirit is upon us and is pleased with us. Secondly, knowing that I belong to Him and am chosen by him, will keep me humble for I know there is nothing I can be proud of. Thirdly, with this as the foundation, we can serve in this and other churches with confidence and security. We are not doing this, in order to please God or to please men, for God is already pleased with us..

I remember an incident about Sean, my youngest son. When he was a toddler and in a children's program while the adults were attending a joint city wide gathering, his teacher asked for his name, and he responded, “you don't know me? My dad is the

pastor.” The teacher said, oh, I am so sorry. Sean was so full of confidence because he knew who his father was. Isn’t this something we can learn from? Because we belong to God, are chosen and sustained by him, we too can serve and lead with confidence. Not confident in ourselves, but in the God who has first called and chosen us.

II. God’s servant is under His directives.

God’s servant not only has a clear and unfaltering identity, he/she is also given a mission. “I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.” Vs 3,6,7, “he will faithfully bring forth justice;.....”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.” In a world that is dark and full of alienation; from God and from each other, the Servant Messiah’s mission was to be a light and to bring about justice. It is a ministry of reconciliation; bringing people to God and to each other. And with the coming of Jesus, the servant Messiah, we saw him setting the prisoners free, gave light to the blind. Again, we are to be careful not to equate ourselves with Jesus, but to be mindful that we are called to be like him. In 2 Corinthians 5:19-20, we have these words: “¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” So, what is our mission, our agenda? To bring about reconciliation between men and God, and men with each other.

Last year I shared with you a thought from Oswald Chambers that we have no

agenda of our own. God's agenda is to be ours. God's agenda, directive is that his servant be his ambassadors, to bring people to Him. No matter in what capacity we are serving, our mission, our directive is to bring people to God, to be reconciled with Him. When we serve in the Adult Education, Outreach, Assimilation, General Affairs, Children and Youth departments, our responsibilities may be different, but we all have one mission, one directive, that is we are Christ's ambassadors, to bring others to God. I have also shared this with the elders and deacons recently. When we look at our ministry, or when we evaluate ourselves, we don't just look at what we have done or accomplished, but to see how our ministries have affected people's lives. Have they come to know the Lord because of what we do? Are we bringing people closer to the Lord? We are on a mission: to bring people back to God.

III. God's servants serve with God's heart.

We have a clear identity and mission. Now how do we carry out this mission? How do we bring about this reconciliation between God and men? Are there skills we need to know? In this instant society, we want some simple skills, or Apps to help us, so that all we need to do is to press a button, and the methods are all there. we want a manual like: 10 minutes to be an effective ambassador for Christ, Counseling for Dummies; Preaching for Dummies, Leading a church for Dummies. Certainly skills are important, yet the scripture seldom provide us with that. Instead, the scriptures constantly tell us about our heart condition. Skills and techniques will vary from church to church. The Purpose Driven church and its operating manual works well with some churches, but brings havoc to others. There are many ways to preach a sermon, to lead a department and to lead a church. But if the heart is not right, it is really nothing in God's sight. Let's

take a look at what this Servant Song tells us about the condition of the servant's heart.

First, a humble heart. Vs. 2, “²He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street;” this servant will not make noise so that others will notice him. This is so upside down to today's attitude. Politicians spend millions of dollars to hire consultants to make them noticeable and marketable. Mit Romney and some other candidates spent two months going to every Iowa county to make themselves known. We keep telling ourselves, publicity is number one. But here we read that don't make noise just in case others will notice you. If we make others notice us, we are bringing attention and glory to ourselves. What does vs. 8 say? “⁸I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.” If there is anyone to be noticed, it will be God. If there is any glory, it will go to God. A servant is to point others to God, so that others will speak well of God, to give him the glory. We the servants are to be in the background. To the elders and deacons among us, this will be the one time in a year that you will stand in front of the congregation, so the people can know who you are. From now on, you will be working in the background, without being noticed, and yet pointing others to Christ, so that he alone will get the honor and glory.

Secondly, a tender heart. Vs.3, “³a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;..” this is a favorite text for many of us. As we look at life, there are times we feel that we are that broken reed, like the candle that is about to go out. Yet our Lord, so tenderly helped us to stand, and to start glowing again in the dark. Sometimes it was his direct intervention, other times it was through another believer. As a servant leader, we are to learn to see people through God's eyes. They are not just individuals that can help and serve in this church, but with soft and tender hearts

to see them as reeds about to be broken and candles about to go out. As a servant, as a leader, God wants us to be tender, gentle to them, like a mother being tender to her children. Last year this time we learned that our words are to encourage and help those that carried heavy burdens of life. No matter who they are, be tender towards them.

Lastly, a persistent heart. Vs. 4, “⁴He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth;..” The servant Messiah will not grow faint or discouraged implies there are times he will face situations and events that can cause him to grow faint and discouraged. And in those moments, he is to stand firm and be strong. When I find myself desperate for help, I am so tempted to say, “this is not a difficult ministry. Anyone can handle it, and you certainly will have no problem doing so.” Now, have you heard this before? Do you believe in it? Instead, I learn to tell you as it is, “this ministry is not easy, you will get burn out real fast if you don’t do it properly; it will take up quite a bit of your time, and if you don’t work smart, you will be out in no time.” Once a brother, who was preparing for ministry said, “I have too much on my plate, too much pressure.” I jokingly responded to him, “If you think this is bad, wait till you actually start your ministry.”

On a serious note; ministry, any kind of ministry; is difficult. Soon you will find out that people, instead of cooperating, will criticize you. They may have promised but eventually let you down. You think you have the best program, preached the best sermon, and someone will come up and say, I really don’t understand what you are trying to say. Discouraging and disappointing events can occur daily; but don’t let them get to you. Why? God has chosen you, you belong to him, he will sustain you, his spirit is upon you. You are not doing this alone. So when you find yourselves in those situations and

moments, come and talk to him. So, in those moments when people challenge us, who are you? What, you don't know me? My father is the creator, the almighty God and

Conclusion:

In recent years, God has given me opportunities to serve different ministers in China. I either teach Homiletics or Pastoral theology. In pastoral theology I taught biblical principles of what it means to be a minister and also share with them my experiences, the joyous moments as well as the sad and failing moments. However, in teaching, as I listen to them, I quickly learned of the difficult situations they are in. Whether they are house churches or open church ministers, they face similar challenges. When I learn of their hardships, I find myself ashamed, that I really have no right to complain about my ministries in NA. Compared to my ministries in STL and Houston, they would consider it heaven, even though at times I may consider it otherwise. I also come away realizing that even without our going there to train and teach, they will do just as well under God's watchful eyes.

In November, in between the classes, I led them in singing one or two songs that I am familiar with. After one session, I realized that I am not the right person to do so. So I asked them to name one person to lead. Here are two clippings of the same group.

Yes, their ministry was tough, challenging and no minister from outside China would like to trade places with them. Yet as I listened to their singing and how they prayed; I was deeply touched. And I realized that this is the soul of the churches in China. Why were they able to continue in spite of the hardships? [“¹Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him;..”](#)