

Date: 01/15/2012
Text: Isaiah 49:1-7
Title: Servant Song 3
Theme:

Introduction:

These past few months we have devoted much of our messages to the issue of Leadership. Since we have defined leaders as anyone who has influence over others, then each one of us, in our own right, is a leader.

From parents at home to professionals at work, we do want to know how we can be more effective leaders at home, at work and at church. Certainly, as I said before there are plenty of books for us to read; yet what is even more important is to listen to what God has to say on this matter. In the OT book of Isaiah, there are 4 chapters called Servant Songs, 42, 49, 50 and 53. In these chapters, God through the prophet Isaiah gives us a portrait of the Servant Messiah, Jesus Christ that was to come. These chapters tell us about the Servant Messiah's character, his work and his mission. In today's passage we learn that as the servant belongs to God, he serves according to the heart of the one who had called and chosen him.

I. The servant belongs to God.

Vs.1, 3,5, "

_____ " Give us a clear picture that this Servant Messiah belongs to God. He was honored in God's sight, being very precious. From these verses we also know:

1. Called by God.

Again, God called him. By now, we must have noticed that in the Servant Songs; being called and chosen by God is a central theme. We also learned from Matthew 1:27, “她必生一個兒子，你要給他起名叫耶穌，因為他要把自己的子民從罪惡中拯救出來。” Jesus, the servant messiah was called and given a name even before his was born.

2. Reflecting God's glory.

God called this servant messiah, belong to God. He had that noble status, identity. What was expected of him? Vs.3 tells us that God will be glorified in him. This servant messiah would reflect God's glory in his life. Upon Jesus entering into the world, we read in John 1:14, 2:11 “道成了肉身，住在我們中間，滿有恩典和真理。我們見過他的榮光，正是從父而來的獨生子的榮光.....這是耶穌所行的第一件神蹟，是在加利利的迦拿行的。他顯出了自己的榮耀，他的門徒就信了他。” Jesus came to do the will of the Father. Through out Jesus' life, he was a mirror of God's glory, reflecting his compassion, righteousness and holiness. When we see Him, we see God.

What does this mean to us today? As we are God's chosen people, belonging to Him, we too are to be mirrors of God; reflecting his righteousness, justice and love.

Sometimes when I reflect upon my life and ministry, I feel there are too many times, it was a clear reflection of my personality. I know this is inevitable, but is my personality obstructing the message I try to proclaim? I often wonder, did others see Christ in me? Few years back, before a well-known minister came to Houston for a weekend ministry, I wrote to the sponsors about my concern about this

person's personality. I wrote, that the Chinese churches worldwide had benefited greatly from his ministry. However, too often we see the personality more than the message coming through loud and clear. I constantly remind colleagues, my students and myself that we are to be careful and not to let our particular bend of personality overshadow the precious message we have. Called by God and belonging to Him requires us to reflect his beauty in everything we do.

II. A servant has the ministry of the Word.

In vs.2, “他使我的口如快刀，把我藏在他手的陰影之下；他又使我成為磨亮的箭，把我藏在他的箭袋裡” Mouth is generally referring to speaking God's word. The Servant Messiah has the ministry of the word. Here we noticed two things about this Word.

1. Effective ministry of the Word.

Two images are used to describe this word. A sharp sword and polished/pointed arrow. When Jesus taught, people were amazed at his words. The words were gracious and with authority, unlike anything they had heard. In Act 2:37, “他們聽了以後，覺得扎心，就對彼得和其餘的使徒說：“弟兄們，我們應當作甚麼呢？” The apostles' words were like sharp sword and pointed arrow, piercing the listeners' hearts. Later, the author of Hebrew wrote in 4:12, “神的道是活的，是有效的，比一切兩刃的劍更鋒利，甚至可以刺入剖開靈與魂，關節與骨髓，並且能夠辨明心中的思想和意念。

2. Revelation of the Word.

In verse 2 we also learn that the word was concealed under God's hand and hidden in the arrow bag. When Jesus came, he revealed to us what was hidden. He told us the gospel message that was hidden up till that point. When the time was ripe, in the

fullness of time, He came and revealed to us God's salvation plan and the gospel message.

What does this all mean to us? The word has already been revealed to us and it is no more hidden. As his servants, as leaders, as people of influence, one main aspect of our ministry is the Word. In order for our ministry of Word be sharp, cutting and effective, long and hidden hours of preparation is required. This means before we bring the word out, whether in preaching, in SS, in bible study settings, there must be thorough preparation. I tell colleagues, students, and myself to not use the biblical text to support an idea or position we may have. Don't read our message into the text. Let the biblical text decide what our message is. This will involve careful and detailed study of commentaries so that I can have a clearer understanding of God's word. I know among us, there are many individuals would spend many hours to prepare for a Sunday school lesson or Bible study. It is good to remember that before a knife comes out, before an arrow is shot, they are previously hidden.

III. A servant is concerned about God's ultimate evaluation.

Vs.4, “但我說： “我勞碌是徒然的；我用盡氣力，是虛無虛空的；然而我當得的公理是在耶和華那裡，我的賞賜是在我的 神那裡。” Vs.1-3 can be seen from the beginning of the Servant Messiah's ministry. Vs. 4 appears to be from the closing of his ministry. Consider the following. After 3 years of public ministry, the large crowd he had in his Galilean ministry is diminishing. The official religious leaders were plotting his death. By the time he was arrested, all the disciples had deserted him. Out of the twelve that had followed him for 3 years, one betrayed him. When he was on the cross, only one disciple, John was there. This was not a pretty picture. In the garden of

Gethsemane, he did not thank God for the upcoming death on the cross. Instead he asked, if possible, will God remove it? On the cross, he cried out in agony, why have thou forsaken me? They appear to be voices of a discouraged and despondent person. He did not have the 黄上賜死，谢谢黄上龙恩 attitude, instead, “I labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity...” from today’s perspective, it was not a good ending. It’s like some missionaries who spent their entire life in some Arab countries without seeing one single convert. It was vain and useless.

Do you ever feel that way? You tried so hard to serve, lead and teach, yet you don’t see much results? Do you ever feel depressed reading some of your friends Christmas letter? “The highlight of this past year was that I was the most productive salesperson in our company, and awarded an all expense paid trip to Hawaii for one week. My 12 year old granddaughter got to play in the Boston Symphony beside Yo Yo Ma.” Or “the high light of this past year we saw 200 people joining the church.” These letters make us feel a little like losers, right?

Yet, how did vs.4 end? “然而我當得的公理是在耶和華那裡，我的賞賜是在我的神那裡。” Yes, from the human perspective it was a bummer, but I look forward to the reward from God. As servants of God, what counts is how God sees us. God looks for faithful and not successful stewards. What an encouragement and comfort to know that God sees us clearly and he will reward us accordingly. A phrase we often hear, you will get your reward in heaven. It sounds like a cliché, yet it is true.

IV. A servant is to major on great things of God.

The Servant Messiah had his moments of discouragement, now, what is God’s response? Vs. 5, 6, “現在，耶和華說：（他自我還在母胎的時候，就造了我作他的

僕人，好使雅各回轉歸向他，使以色列可以聚集到他那裡；我在耶和華眼中被看為尊貴，我的 神是我的力量。） [I “你作我的僕人，使雅各眾支派復興使以色列中得保全的歸回，只是小事，我還要使你作列國的光，使我的救恩傳到地極。”](#)

God is saying that I have made you a light in Israel. But Israel needs restoration. The gentiles had neither light nor restoration, they needed both. Your ministry in Israel is important but compared to what I will do, is a small thing. Several hundred years later, in Matthew 28 and Acts 1:8, we read how Jesus sent his disciple to all cities in the land of Israel and to the ends of the world. By the time the book of Acts come to an end, the gospel message had reached the end of the world as known in the first century. And then after Acts, the gospel continued to move from one city to another, one continent to another. As a reminder, this is how the gospel message came to you and me.

Again, we ask, what does this mean to us? Yes, what we are doing is important, but how about the greater things? Yes, SS, outreach, teaching, caring, worship and preaching are all important. But how about bringing the gospel message to places where it had never been there before? I have been to numerous deacons and elders meetings; spending countless hours in discussion. How many of those meetings do I still remember? How many of those meetings brought about earth shattering decisions? Its not that those meetings are not important, but don't forget the more important, the greater things in God's eyes. Don't major in the minors, and forgetting the majors. Or don't get caught in the bigness of small things.

Even as we focus on how to improve our ministry here, let us not lose sight of the greater work; of bringing the gospel message to people who have never heard it before.

Conclusion:

As we draw a close to this particular Servant Song, let us listen to vs.7, “以色列的救贖主，以色列的聖者耶和華，對那被人藐視的、被本國憎惡的、被統治者奴役的，這樣說：“君王看見了，就必起立，領袖看見了，也要下拜，都因信實的耶和華，就是揀選了你的、以色列的聖者的緣故” This tells us what will happen to this Servant Messiah. While on earth, He was deeply despised, and was a subject to Emperor Augustus, Tiberius and Herod. These emperors were not benign kings, at times they were rather ruthless. Yet Jesus was a subject under them. Then there will come a day, when all Kings and princes shall bow before him and worship him. This is what the apostle John tells us that in eternity, peoples from all nations, kings and princes will come and will bow down and worship Him. Because God is faithful. God will not let his chosen one to be ashamed.

As we serve Him, we know there will be ups and downs. Very often we will feel what is the point to all this. We spoke, we preached but no one listened. Yet what is encouraging is to know that our God looks for individuals who are faithful to him. He is looking for individuals that will truly reflect his glory, his purity, righteousness and justice. Not only this, because He is faithful, because he has chosen and called us, we know with certainty he will leave us to be ashamed. Then there will come a day, when we will join other creatures falling before Him and worship Him. Don't let the smallness of the present world bog us down. Instead look at the great things that are to come.