

Servants Who Get The Job Done

Rev. Michael J. Mattil

Isaiah 42:1-7 1 "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. 2 He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. 3 A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; 4 he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope." 5 This is what God the LORD says-- he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it: 6 "I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, 7 to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

"**WANTED:** Persons to work under adverse conditions. **Individuals** must be highly motivated self-starters, expected to set high goals and achieve higher than average results. **Don't** expect supportive words or encouragement. **Little** or no pay will be given." If you saw an ad like this in the newspaper, how would you respond? Most of you would probably pass over it quickly. You wouldn't consider such a job for yourself. But wouldn't it be great if you had someone like that working for you? Or better yet, wouldn't you like to have a servant like that around the house? Today's text talks about a servant like that---*a servant who gets the job done.*

That servant Isaiah describes is a unique individual. It is someone hand-picked by God Himself. A closeness between God and this servant is evident: *my Chosen One in whom I delight.* Of course, God is speaking of His Son, Jesus of Nazareth. At His Baptism, we hear the Father say *This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.* He is the one who will get the job done. God promised to put His Spirit on this special servant. We see that promise fulfilled in the Gospel lesson, when the Spirit descended on Him in bodily form as a dove. We usually think of servants as those who do menial tasks that require more brawn than brains. We don't expect too much of them. In contrast, Isaiah describes this Servant who gets the job done as one who sets high goals.

Looking at Jesus, we see that he was never content speaking pious platitudes or trying to convince people to get along with one another. Nor would he be content with just being an example. The goal of Jesus was not simply to publicize the covenant agreement that God made with Israel. Rather, **He came as a Servant to be the essence, the fulfillment of that covenant.** He personally brought to God's people the love and grace that had been promised to them. And His activity was not limited to Israel, the Jewish people. He was also the Light to the Gentiles. The forgiveness of sins that He brought was for all men.

Thank God that He sent a Savior who set high goals and would settle for nothing short of your entire redemption. Yet we, too, are to be servants. In our lives, we imitate those whom we admire. Let us imitate Jesus, then, and set high goals for our service in His name. Our service will be different than that of Jesus: You are not expected to redeem the world, since Jesus already did that through His death and resurrection. But God has called you to be his servants. Your service to Jesus is to go and make disciples, to tell others about the redemption He accomplished. In all the activities here at Grace -- a covered dish dinner, youth program, children's ministries, work days, worship services, Ladies Society, Small Group Studies -- our goal is nothing less than to serve our Lord by presenting Christ crucified and risen as the world's only hope and Savior. That is what your life as a follower of Christ is all about: **knowing and proclaiming Jesus as Savior.**

Unfortunately, we don't always get too enthused about that. You can always find reasons for not participating in the programs and activities of the Church, excuses for not being the servants that God has called you to be. And the reason for this attitude is sin, your sin. Each week in our worship, we include the confession of sins and the absolution, or announcement of forgiveness, in one form or another. This is not so in all churches. In fact some people find it offensive to admit to God that they have sinned. I'd like to share with you part of a letter that was in a magazine about 20 years ago. The letter may be old, but the attitude is still around:

...concerning the prayer of confession which appears endlessly in some church bulletins and ... declares we have sinned in all sorts of ways and asks God's forgiveness. There are times when I attend divine worship with a prayer of thankfulness that due to God's grace and my own consecrated effort I have lived a fairly decent life during the past week. I come not with a load of guilt but with a hope that as I wait upon the Lord I shall renew my strength for another week of spiritual progress. I look about me at my fellow worshipers, realizing the victorious lives some have lived in the face of great obstacles. I am sure that on a given Sunday morning, I could find many people who could profitably pray the prayer of confession printed in the bulletin, but most of them are not in church with me. It does seem to me an exercise in futility for a pastor to urge his people to a life of victory over sin knowing that next Sunday and ever after he shall be asking them to pray, "Lord, we have sinned against you in all sorts of ways." Is there no deliverance from such church bulletins? (Your Church, Dec 1985)

This man is a little mixed up. He seems to have the attitude of the Pharisees, that he is not such a bad guy. He doesn't realize that he daily sins much and is in need of forgiveness. He should rejoice in the fact that he can confess his sins, in public and in private, and hear that sweet

proclamation that for the sake of Christ and Christ alone he is forgiven. Instead, he writes that he lives a pretty good life "through his own consecrated effort." He is in the dangerous area of thinking that maybe he doesn't need a Savior at all.

Maybe you have similar attitudes. Maybe you think it is silly to have to confess your sins publicly each week, since you live a pretty good life. And maybe you feel, like the letter writer, that those who worship with you don't sin. But **look around you** right now. Look at those people sitting next to you, in front and in back. Those people are sinners – including the one talking to you. Those people give in to the temptations that come every day. Those people deserve to die eternally because of their sins. That includes you and me. Need convincing? Have you spoken an unkind or harsh word this week to your spouse or children or parents? Have you had less than pure thoughts about a boss or friend or co-worker? Have you used foul language this week? And what about the times you sin by not doing things -- How many of you take the time daily to read your Bible? How about once a week? How many of you take advantage of the opportunities for Bible Study here at church? To think that you could possibly get all you need out of a 60 minute worship service once a week is neglecting the vast treasure God has given you in His Word. And that, my friends, is sin. Our lives are full of sin that keep us from being the kind of servants God wants us to be.

But those people sitting here, in addition to being sinners, are also those who have come to **faith in Christ, and that makes all the difference**. You know and believe that His death was in your place, and that He paid for all your transgressions. That is why it is such a comfort to be able to confess our sins each week. And I consider it a privilege and joy to be able to assure you, after that confession, that **ALMIGHTY GOD OUR HEAVENLY FATHER HAS HAD MERCY UPON US, AND HAS GIVEN HIS ONLY SON TO DIE FOR US, AND FOR HIS SAKE FORGIVES US ALL OUR SINS**.

This is what fills our hearts with joy, and makes us want to be His servants, instruments to spread the message of Jesus. The ways you do this will vary. You might not be able to share your faith verbally with a stranger, but the way you live and act can be a witness. And some of you are able to tell others what Jesus means to you, how He saved you and loves you. (By the way, we are sponsoring a **Witness Workshop** here at Grace on February 10 to help you learn new ways you can be a witness in your everyday living!)

Another way to be a Servant who gets the job done is to **support the work of this congregation** with your efforts, abilities, participation and contributions. The purpose of all this is to share with others the Good News of Jesus. That is our reason for being a congregation! Your contributions enable us to work together to proclaim Jesus as the Servant who has done everything necessary to save mankind from sin. Your contributions also allow us to support that proclamation throughout this state and around the world through our support of our World Mission Program. Many of you know I will be traveling to India at the end of this month as part of a group that will tour the Mission Work being done there and find ways that we at Grace can be a part of that. After all, that is what we are to be about: servants who get the job done, supporting the proclamation of Jesus as Savior in every way possible.

Financial contributions are just one part of being the kind of Servant God wants you to be. Everything you do as a follower of Christ is to be done for Him and in His service. Jesus' job was to be God's Servant, to bring salvation through His life and death for sinners. He got that job done, and He did it well. He did it so well that all who accept Him in faith can be absolutely sure of God's pardon and eternal life. **Your job now is to be His witnesses.** You have been called not only into His Kingdom, but also into His service. I pray that God will use each of you effectively as His servants. Set high goals, start this week, and get the job done.