



**Isaiah 42:1-9 NRSV**

Here is 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.  
2 He will not cry or lift up his voice,  
or make it heard in the street;  
3 a bruised reed he will not break,  
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;  
he will faithfully bring forth justice.  
4 He will not grow faint or be crushed  
until he has established justice in the earth;  
and the coastlands wait for his teaching.  
5 Thus says God, the Lord,  
who created the heavens and stretched them out,  
who spread out the earth and what comes from it,  
who gives breath to the people upon it  
and spirit to those who walk in it:  
6 I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness,

**CONCORD SUNDAY  
SCHOOL**

**LECTIONARY  
LESSON 2**

**SUNDAY,  
JANUARY 12, 2020**

I have taken you by the hand and kept you;  
I have given you as a covenant to the people,  
a light to 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.  
8 I am the Lord, that is my name;  
my glory I give to no other,  
nor my praise to idols.  
9 See, the former things have come to pass,  
and new things I now declare;  
before they spring forth,  
I tell you of them.

### **Background**

As Christians, it is almost impossible to read this passage and not think it's about Jesus. Perhaps the prophets were imagining The One To Come, and perhaps they were not. The fact of the matter is, Christ had not yet shown up in the flesh. This passage shows up nestled between stories of assurance in Isaiah 41 and the promise of restoration in Isaiah 43. As we are reading, let us think about the people who meet the criteria of God's "chosen," both back then and today.

Today's lesson will focus on **living as a servant of God.**

**Read the scripture out loud together.**

**Discuss with a partner.** What is the last compliment you received? What about the last compliment you gave?

**What's happening during this passage?**

God is giving a shout out to the "servant" who makes God's soul "delight." This person is someone who will not get tired of working until justice comes. People from all over the world, including the "coastland" will wait for this powerful teaching. These teachings will be so powerful that they will transcend geo-political borders. This person will be like a "Covenant" to the people, a "light to the nations," to "open the eyes that are blind," "to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon." It is through this

“servant,” that salvation from the political, social and personal oppressions will be remedied.

### **Why does this matter for the people of this time?**

For all the work that the prophet does to establish the character of the Servant, we never get a name or even any identifying demographic information. We see the pronoun “he” often, but it is unclear who it references. Is it speaking of a nation? A community? One person? A specific person? Someone already alive? Someone not yet born? Someone who already passed on? We don’t know. But what is most important is that there are clear behaviors and actions for The Servant. The Servant will be a light to the nations, heal those with diseases, free the imprisoned. It’s a very clear job description. Anyone who does these things can be someone in whom God’s soul “delights.”

### **So if Jesus wasn’t born yet, why do people associate this passage with his ministry?**

Jesus is one of many biblical figures that fits this description. In the Old Testament and New Testament, there are stories of people who established justice and brought leadership to their communities. Moses, Miriam, Mary, Joseph, Jonah... The list goes on and on. Jesus, as a Jewish person, was intimately familiar with the scriptures. He knew these passages so well because he had studied them respectfully and with curiosity. As such, he knew how to apply the wisdom of the scriptures in his own work. This made him a very effective preacher and teacher.

In Luke 4, he recites this very passage as his personal call. He knows that these words are sacred and held by the community he speaks to. In fact, in front of other religious people, he unrolls the scroll to recite this very passage as an act of claiming the tradition. He is not breaking away from his own tradition-- he is continuing it. He is honoring it.

### **Learning all of this, how can modern Christians take encouragement from this text?**

God calls all kinds of people to participate in the vision. There is no one who is left behind. In fact, God uses the very people that most folks would have overlooked in order to complete the most magnificent miracles. In this passage, we see God’s rubric for The Servant. This job description is unlike any other we would see today. There is no requirement for education. There is no expectation that you will know how to use

specific software. There is no expectation that you will show up between the hours of 9 and 5 to accomplish the task; the task is lifelong. God has requirements of us, but they do not look like the requirements of Humans. God also puts God's weight on the affirmation, too!

“God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it: I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness...”

God isn't playing! And God's recommendation for the servant is no small gesture. It is a recommendation and affirmation that comes from someone powerful. How special to be called and loved by God! Each one of us is.

**What questions do you still have of this scripture? How will you commit to journeying with this text this week?**

### Connection to Today's World



In 2018, Sterling K. Brown became the first Black man to win the Golden Globe for best actor in a television drama. Yes, in the award's over 70 years, never has a Black man won in this category. In his acceptance speech, he thanked the writer of the show for taking a risk in telling a unique story. He won for the role of Randall Pearson in NBC's *This*

*is Us*. His character was adopted by two White parents who sadly lost their third triplet in labor. He was raised in a family of four White people as the only Black child. The show centers the family's challenges and celebrates identity, belonging, and love.

“I have benefited from colorblind casting — which means, you know what, ‘Hey, let's throw a brother in this role, right?’ It's always really cool. But Dan Fogelman, you wrote a role for a black man. That could only be played by a black man. And so what I appreciate so much about this thing is that I am being seen for who I am and being appreciated for who I am. And that makes it that much more difficult to dismiss me, or dismiss anybody who looks like me.”

Sterling K. Brown affirmed that the role that gave him this win was *specifically* written for a Black man. It didn't just happen to be something a Black man could do. And knowing that he could tell a story with integrity--and be honored by a prestigious institution without compromising who he was-- is a great blessing.

**Journal:** Who in your community fits this description of God's servant? Write their name down and some of their characteristics.

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**Closing:** Sing "Give Me That Old Time Religion."

Give me that old-time religion  
Give me that old-time religion  
Give me that old-time religion  
It's good enough for me

It was good for the Hebrew Children...  
It was good for Mary and Joseph...  
It was good for Harriet Tubman...

**Prayer:**

Dear God,

Even before we were born, you knew who we could become. You knew what would change, and you knew what would remain consistent. You had plans and hopes and dreams for us in your world.

God, help us to live into the greatest dreams you have for us. Do not let us grow complacent or weary. And when we need a nudge, support us and show us that you called us. Help us find our place in this world, just as you desire.

In Jesus' name we pray,  
Amen

**Works Cited**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/07/movies/sterling-brown-speech-golden-globes.html>