

Palm Sunday

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 50:4-9a

Israel's Sin and the Servant's Obedience

4 The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. 5 The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward. 6 I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. 7 But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. 8 He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. 9 Behold, the Lord GOD helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.

50:4-9 (or 4-11) The third of the four servant songs (CSB)

The first verse of this chapter identified the speaker as “the Lord.” But now someone else speaks, because he announces His relationship to “the Sovereign Lord.” The Hebrew mind assumed that everyone reading the passage would understand that the speaker had changed. We consider the speaker to be the Servant of the Lord, whom we have met before. (PBC)

50:4-5, 7, 9 *Lord God.* The only uses of this title in the servant songs. (CSB)

50:4 *Me.* The Servant, identified by title in 42:1; 49:6. (TLSB)

The Servant is given a learned “tongue” and a listening “ear” characteristic of “those being taught/disciples.” The Servant is the disciple par excellence because he always listens to God (Deut. 6:4), and this gives him the ability to speak a Word that sustains the weary. (CC)

John 5:19, “Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”

John 8:28 “Jesus therefore said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.”

In 40:28-31, Yahweh had promised to renew the strength of the weary. The tired Israelites are a bundle of contradictions. On the one hand, the majority lament that their way is hidden from Yahweh and that he has neglected their “justice/cause” (40:27). These people share a commonality with pagan idolaters (44:12) and are therefore exhorted to awaken from their lengthy lethargy (51:17; 52:1). They have fainted and lie at the head of every street (51:20). On the other hand, some are “pursuing righteousness” and “seeking Yahweh” (51:1), who claims them all as “my people” and “my nation” (51:4; cf. 40:1). Yet these believers are sinful, desperate, and exhausted. (CC)

Jesus invites all who are weary to come to him for rest (Mt.11:28). Every lackluster believer may listen confidently for his encouraging Word. Ears are on the outside of our heads and not on the inside. This physical makeup encourages us to listen to God and not to ourselves. And our God speaks! The OT refers to the Word of God coming to his peoples at least 394 times. (CC)

His voice becomes even more pronounced in Jesus. “No one ever spoke like this man” (Jn. 7:46). “He was teaching as one who has authority and not as their scribes” (Mt. 7:29). Jesus is able, like no other, to bolster and brace the weary. One of the most galvanizing promises Christ made is that the enemy, whose accusations continually exhaust us, will go down in defeat. Our chief adversary, Satan, will be consumed in the same way that a moth eats a garment (51:9; 51:8). “We are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Rom. 8:37). Christ’s word does not condemn weary exiles; it save them (cf. 3:17). The Servant’s surrender to God’s plan, leading to death, becomes the source of our needed justification (Is. 53:11; 54:17). (CC)

Like a teacher awakening his student, Yahweh opens the ear of the Servant (cf. 22:14). This contrasts with Israel’s inability to open its ears and listen (48:8) The root problem is idolatry. Fascination with counterfeit gods cuts off all communication between Yahweh and his people (6:9-10). In the Servant, though, Israel can be reconciled to Yahweh (53:11; cf. Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:22). Those who listen to the Servant’s voice are led out of darkness and begin to walk in the light (Is. 50:10; Jn. 8:12). (CC)

instructed tongue – limood – A tongue that has been taught. The KJV says “the tongue of the learned.” Sometimes it is also called a disciples tongue. That would imply ongoing learning and following of Christ. It is one that is well educated and therefore can speak with authority. This was especially true when it came to God’s Word.

The Servant is the most excellent disciple because He listens before He speaks. “To listen” is to epitomize Israel’s response to the Lord (cf Dt 6:4). (TLSB)

The Servant is the most excellent disciple because He listens before He speaks. (TLSB)

The Hebrew describes it as the “tongue of learners,” i.e. a tongue adapted to deliver effectively the message that is given Him to communicate. (Leupold)

Trained tongue, a well-taught tongue. Christ did nothing of Himself; only as the Father had taught Him, so He spoke (John 8:28). (PC)

The power of the Word parted the Red Sea because the Lord said, “Strike it!” (cf. Ex. 14:16). By this Word the sea was divided, and He commanded them to cross over. Here dullness and weakness depart from them. So weakness departs from the Word; then the water of Baptism and the bread and wine become exceedingly powerful, for beyond the water and the bread and wine there is the Word of Christ, who accomplishes more than does the weakness of the appearance, the minister, and the element. This is so because the Lord God has added a tongue that is taught, because it is a tongue instructed by the Lord. The Lord is the teacher; He teaches the tongue in such a way that it speaks nothing but what is divinely inspired. He says elsewhere, The Lord “made My mouth like a sharp sword ... He made Me a polished arrow” (Is. 49:2). This is a Hebraism. Christ has the power of administration, He has the scepter, so that those who have accepted the Word would not immediately be offended. This Word is not humanly transmitted but divinely, and therefore its divine power comes to the aid of the fettered, those enduring trials, and all the weary and exhausted, since these lack resources and wisdom and are the off scouring before the world. The Lord truly says, “In due time I know that I will speak with those people so that they might have strength in weakness.” However, He does not want to set us free at once, as we have prescribed time, place, and manner for Him. What He wills to do will be enough, if only we trust in Him. (Luther)

Exodus 4:12 “Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.”

John 7:46 “No one ever spoke the way this man does,” the guards declared.”

are taught – The prophets received communication from God, often in their sleep. This afforded them great insight as what God wanted them to do.

Psalms 71:17 “Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds.

Jeremiah 32:33 “They turned their backs to me and not their faces; though I taught them again and again, they would not listen or respond to discipline.”

John 6:45 “It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God.’

Ephesians 4:21 “Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.”

word of him who weary. † In 42:3 the servant assisted the weak. Cf. Jer 31:25. (CSB)

yawafe – Those who are exhausted, faint or fatigued.(QV)

Jesus’ words have the power to convert “weary” souls. His very words are sheer “spirit and life.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

The Servant’s mission has to do both with Israel and the Gentiles. Israelites were laboring under the burden of the law and finding no peace, and the Gentiles laboring under the oppressive burden of idol-religions that afforded no peace to the burdened conscience of the sinner. (Leupold)

Isaiah 42:3 “A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;

Jeremiah 31:25 “I will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint.”

Matthew 11:28-29 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

morning by morning he awakens – oor – To help rise up or to stir. It is like being awakened so one can be instructed or learn the next lesson. (CSB)

awakens my ear. Unlike Israel (see v. 2), the servant was responsive to God. (CSB)

While rebellious Israel turned a deaf ear to God, the Servant would “speak just as the Father taught” Him (Jn 8:27–29). Therefore, a word from Him sufficed to sustain the weary. (TLSB)

To make it ready for instruction. A little bit like toning a piano so that great music make come from it.

Unlike Israel, which often was deaf to God’s Word, the Messiah would eagerly listen. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

God is described as supplying every day, as a necessary gift, an alert ear, keeping it sensitive to the divine teaching. As true man He remained a “learner” all His days. (Leupold)

Not enlightening Him occasionally, as He did the prophets, by dreams and visions, but continually whispering in his ear. At n time did the Father “leave Him alone” (John 8:29) or cease to speak to Him. “morning by morning” is not to be narrowed to the bare literal meaning, but to be taken in the sense of “uninterruptedly) (PC)

those who are taught – The student is paying attention. (CSB)

Like a pupil who is ready to learn. But when they hear us for the purpose of passing judgment on the Word, they are bringing the ears of a teacher. One who is eager for the truth submits his ears to learning, and he does not fight to show off his skill. To one who makes this kind of accusation you must answer: “I am not here to teach the teacher but the pupil who is eager and wearied, who reduces his wisdom to nothing.” Here is a most harmonious relationship between the learned tongue, the ready ear, and the heart prepared for learning. (Luther)

To have the proper spiritual understanding of the Lord’s will and to yield a glad obedience to it. Cp. Ps. 40, 6-8; Heb. 10, 5-7. (Kretzmann)

50:5 Because the Servant is listening, it follows that He cannot be rebellious. This description sets Him apart from all other servants, prophets, or leaders of Israel, as everyone else had times in which they turned their back on the Lord (e.g., Ex 4:13; Jer 20:9, 14; Jnh 1:3). Only one Servant could truly claim such obedience to the Lord (cf Jn 8:29). (TLSB)

opened my ear. A sign of obedience. (CSB)

Unlike the rebellious nation of Israel (e.g., 48:4; 8), whose ears are closed (e.g., 42:20), the Servant’s ear are wide open. As Israel’s substitute Servant, he reverses the nation’s deafness (6:10; 42:19). The Servant will never turn back (50:5). He is treated shamefully (50:6), but in the end, he will not be put to shame (50:7). Idolatrous Israel, on the other hand, is turned back in utter shame (42:17). There is a sharp contrast between Israel and the submissive Servant. His life testifies against those who doubt Yahweh’s Word and turn to other gods. (CC)

pawthakh – To loosen, unstop or open wide. This was a sign of obedience which was different than what Israel had been. (QV)

To listen with cheerful willingness. (Kretzmann)

His ear was opened to receive God’s Word perpetually. (PC)

Because the Servant is listening, it follows that He cannot be rebellious. The description sets Him apart from all other servants, prophets, or leaders of Israel, as everyone else had times in which they turned their back on the Lord (e.g. Ex.4:1-13; Jer. 20:9, 14; Jonah 1:3). Only one Servant could truly claim such obedience to the Lord (cf. John 8:29). (TLSB)

This willing, cooperative attitude on the part of the Servant is a restatement of what was also said in 4b. The Servant eagerly desires to be directed by the Lord in all His ways. Jesus obediently fulfilled this

predicted attitude of the Servant as told by Paul. (Phil. 2:5-8) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

Psalm 40:6-8 “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but my ears you have pierced; burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. ⁷ Then I said, “Here I am, I have come— it is written about me in the scroll. ⁸ I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”

Matthew 13:23 “But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

John 14:31 “but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.”

Acts 2:41 “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Acts 17:11 “Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”

Philippians 2:5-8 “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!”

was not rebellious. Unlike Israel. (CSB)

The Servant is not only different from “servant” Israel, but he is also unlike all other OT servants, prophets, or leaders. Moses wanted someone else to rescue Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 4:13). Gideon complains, “My clan is the weakest in Manasseh and I am the least in my father’s house (Judges 6:15). Jonah tried to run away (Jonah 1:3) and would rather die than to submit to his God (Jonah 4:3, 8). Jeremiah admits to being rebellious (Jer. 20:9, 14). Only one Servant can truly claim complete obedience to Yahweh (Jn. 8:29). He does not need forgiveness, since he has no sin (Is. 53:9; Heb. 4:15). Instead, he forgives sinners by offering himself as the “guilt offering” (Is. 53:10). By his agony and disgrace, he makes intercession for transgressors (53:12). (CC)

Not even when His soul was sorrowful even unto death and His human nature was trembling with the severity of the afflictions which He suffered. Cp. Ps. 22, 12-21; 1 Pet. 2, 22. (Kretzmann)

“It is the Lord who opens My ears.” So it is for Christ and so it is for all Christians, even if because of weakness and denseness they feel that all things are contradictions and hindrances and faults in sins, anxiety, poverty, blasphemy, etc. Nevertheless, to hear the Word in earnest and to bear all things for the sake of the Word, this is ultimately very difficult. (Luther)

Matthew 26:39 “Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

Romans 5:19 “For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.”

Hebrews 5:8 “Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered”

I turned not backward – The Servant knows that there will be problems but keeps going just the same. (CSB)

“I do not turn back to Egypt and become unbelieving, but I confess the Word with the mouth as well as in deed. I sing the praises of the power and might of that seemingly powerless and foolish Word.” (Luther)

Deuteronomy 5:32 “So be careful to do what the LORD your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left.”

Joshua 1:7-8 “Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. ⁸ Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”

Proverbs 4:27 “Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.

Luke 9:62 “Jesus replied, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

50:6 Listening (50:4) and obedience (50:5) play a part in learning, but the most important teacher for a theologian of the cross is suffering. Knowledge is not merely antiseptic acquaintance with ideas, but rich development of thought in the crucible of life. Luther writes:

For as soon as God’s Word takes root and grows in you, the devil will harry you, and will make a real doctor of you, and by his insults will teach you to seek and love God’s Word. I myself (if you will permit me, mere mouse-dirt, to be mingled with pepper) am deeply indebted to my papists that through the devil’s raging they have beaten, oppressed, and distressed me so much. That is to say, they have made a fairly good theologian of me, which I would not have become otherwise. And I heartily grant them what they have won in return for making this of me, honor, victory, and triumph, for that’s the way they wanted it. AE 34:287 (CC)

There is an escalation of humiliation in this verse. First the Servant’s back is beaten. Then his beard is pulled out. This was to show contempt and disrespect to the person (2 Sam. 10:4-5; Neh. 13:25). (Young writes: “The Oriental regarded the beard as a sign of freedom and respect, and to pluck out the hair of the beard is to show utter contempt.) Finally, he does not hide his face from mocking and spit. This suggests a quasi-legal setting in which the Servant is publicly shamed. (CC)

Unlike the predominance of passive verbs in the Fourth Servant Song (52:13-53:12), in this verse, the Servant is in control of the situation. He gives his back and his cheeks. He does not hide from scorn or spit. (CC)

In his passion, Jesus takes both an active and a passive role in suffering (often called his active and his passive obedience, respectively). Actively, he says, “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from

my Father” (Jn. 10:17-18 ESV). Passively, the Savior accepts violent abuse and ridicule. “Then they spit in his face and beat him. And some slapped him” (Mt. 26:67; see also 1 Peter 2:23). (CC)

my back to those who strike. Beatings were for criminals or fools (see Pr 10:13; 19:29; 26:3; Mt 27:26; Jn 19:1). (CSB)

The Servant is abused by others as Jesus was in His Passion. (TLSB)

This offers a first look at the suffering the Servant must undergo. The eternal Word of life that the Servant brings to His people will come at a great cost to Him. It will cause Him great suffering and anguish. Describing Christ in this role, Luther said “Christ is the first to undergo a host of afflictions because of the Word” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

This implied that a whipping would take place. Beatings happened to criminals. This and what follows is the “way of the cross.” Jesus freely takes that path. (Luther)

Isaiah 53:5 “but he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”

Matthew 27:26 “Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.”

pull out my beard. A sign of disrespect and contempt (see 2Sa 10:4–5; Ne 13:25). (CSB)

This detail of Jesus’ appearance, commonly depicted by artists, occurs only here. Pulling out of a beard showed contempt and disrespect for the person (cf 2Sm 10:4–5; Ne 13:25). (TLSB)

Beards symbolized dignity, maturity and manhood.

2 Samuel 10:4-5 “So Hanun seized David’s men, shaved off half of each man’s beard, cut off their garments in the middle at the buttocks, and sent them away. ⁵When David was told about this, he sent messengers to meet the men, for they were greatly humiliated. The king said, “Stay at Jericho till your beards have grown, and then come back.”

Nehemiah 13:25 “I rebuked them and called curses down on them. I beat some of the men and pulled out their hair. I made them take an oath in God’s name and said: “You are not to give your daughters in marriage to their sons, nor are you to take their daughters in marriage for your sons or for yourselves.”

Isaiah 7:20 “Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.”

disgrace and spitting. To show hatred (Job 30:10) or to insult or disgrace (Dt 25:9; Job 17:6; Mt 27:30). This treatment of the servant anticipates his ultimate suffering in 52:13–53:12. (CSB)

This was to show hatred, insult or disgrace. Moses had a severe punishment for this.

What does that spitting accomplish except extolling the wisdom of the world? Thus our face toward the world, if anyone will look at it with spiritual eyes, is so spit upon, so polluted by endless disgraces, that no profession is less imposing in the world than that of those who profess the Gospel. But for one disgrace a hundred glorious rays will one day appear, because the Lord Himself is present as our Helper. He strengthens, preserves, and liberates the hearers. (Luther)

Deuteronomy 25:9 “his brother’s widow shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, take off one of his sandals, spit in his face and say, “This is what is done to the man who will not build up his brother’s family line.”

Job 17:6 “God has made me a byword to everyone, a man in whose face people spit.

Job 30:10 “They detest me and keep their distance; they do not hesitate to spit in my face.

Matthew 27:30 “They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again.”

50:7 *Lord God* – adonoy - Lord and master, someone who controls. (QV)

For the third time (50:4-5), the Servant states that the Lord Yahweh assists him in his mission. (CC)

All-powerful Jehovah, the God of the covenant, to whom He has appealed time and again. (Kretzmann)

helps me. In the past He has not been disappointed when He fell back upon the Lord. (Leupold)

not been disgraced ... put to shame. Ultimately the servant will be honored (see 49:7; 52:13; 53:10–12). (CSB)

Disgraced is awlawn – and means to wound or insult. Shame is boosh and means to be disappointed or confounded. Knowing that the all-powerful God will never leave him, he can totally focus his activities and energy on his calling.

The power of God will uphold Him while under the horrible treatment that is to come. If He were a mere man, and on His own, He could not undergo all that is in store. But with the Sovereign Lord’s help, the Servant will not be disgraced or defeated in His stated goal. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

Even death is not a disgrace for the Servant, who places His life in the Lord’s hands. (TLSB)

The assistance given to His soul by the strength of Jehovah keeping Him from being submerged in misery and shame. (Kretzmann)

Psalms 119:6 “then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands.

Romans 9:33 “As it is written: “See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”

Philippians 1:20 “I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.”

1 Peter 4:16 “However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.”

1 John 2:28 “And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.”

my face like flint. Like the prophets, the servant will endure with great determination. Cf. Lk 9:51, where Jesus “resolutely set out for Jerusalem” (lit. “resolutely set his face to go to Jerusalem”). (CSB)

Jesus “set His face” when he resolutely set out for Jerusalem (Lk 9:51). See Jesus’ determination to fulfill everything written by the prophets (Lk 18:31; 24:44). (TLSB)

Confident that he will receive help and vindication, in the face of opposition, he sets his face like flint. In the call narratives of other prophets, Yahweh made Jeremiah to be like an iron pillar (among other metaphors in Jer. 1:18), and he made Ezekiel’s face hard with a forehead like emery (Ezekiel 3:8-9) so that they could withstand the attacks on their ministries from the very people to whom they were called to serve. (CC)

Being sure of not being disgraced or put to shame one can move ahead confidently. Jesus did so and with great determination. By this Jesus is saying “Thy will be done.”

A Christian might be thus influenced that he has a very hard face, since he will have to hear insults and even see openly that everything, however good, right, and true it may be, is given the worst possible interpretation. Let not then Christians despair when they hear such great blasphemies from the fanatics as even human nature cannot bear, unless the Word and the Spirit of God harden our face against the despisers of the Word. (Luther)

Ezekiel 3:9 “I will make your forehead like the hardest stone, harder than flint. Do not be afraid of them or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious house.”

Luke 9:51 “As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.”

50:8 Courtroom settings in Isaiah end with the verdict that Yahweh is in control of history, not idols or Babylonian leaders (e.g., 41:1-7, 21-29; 45:20-25). Here Yahweh is not a protagonist in the court scene (as in chapter 41) but the key witness who is near in a spatial sense, metaphorically standing nearby in court, and/or in a chronological sense, about to intervene. The Servant is confident that Yahweh will preside over his case and acquit him in such a way that his opponents will be unable to condemn him. Paul asks the same question as the Servant: “Who is it who condemns me?” (Rom. 8:33-34). The adversary does not stand a chance. The Vindicator” publicly justifies the Servant on Easter, and he, in turn justifies many (53:11). (CC)

vindicates me. The Lord will find him righteous (see 45:25; for its ultimate fulfillment see 1Ti 3:16). (CSB)

tsawdak – To make right, clear or clean. The nearness is a great confidence builder. He is always near to us too. There is a phrase that says he is “only a prayer away.”

This steadfastness is based on nothing other than the nearness of His Vindicator, not on any capacity of His own to absorb punishment. (Leupold)

Isaiah 45:25 “but in the LORD all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult.”

1 Timothy 3:16 “Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.”

contend with me. Because Christ was sinless, he also nullifies the charges brought against any who believe in him (see Ro 8:31–34). (CSB)

After He had finally accomplished the Father’s plan, there were no accusers left. As often happened, the false accusations fell apart when tested against the truth of the eternal Word. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

The Hebrew is “Lord of judgment.” The expression means not merely one who has a lawsuit or a cause, but one who is “lord of the judgment,” i.e., possessor of the cause, or one who has a claim and can demand that the judgment should be in his favor. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

The guilt of all mankind was indeed imputed to Him, but in His own person He was ever the Holy One of God, whom no man could convict of sin. (Kretzmann)

“No one will dare to go into judgment with Me,” says Christ, for “God is for us, who is against us?” (Rom. 8:31). He brings it about that we consider it of no consequence, even though the whole world contends against us. The rule of the church is not located in pomp and appearance but in the Word, even in the spoken Word, on which we may stand firm against all insults. For “if God is for us, who is against us?” (Luther)

Come, let us be judged. There is nothing evil in the whole world which they themselves commit and do not shove off on us, so as to have a cause against us because of the Gospel. Nevertheless, we can innocently say with Samuel (1 Sam. 12:3): “Whose ox have I taken? Or whose ass have I taken?” Yet they persecute us for the sake of their own tyrants. But we shall persevere. (Luther)

my adversary. Cf. 54:17. (CSB)

This implies the question, “Who is a master over me? It is hard to imagine that anyone would even think of doing something like that.

Let him who believes that he has a case against the Messiah step forward. (Kretzmann)

Isaiah 54:17 “no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me,” declares the LORD

Romans 8:31-34 “What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”

50:9 *who will declare me guilty* – Charged with the sins of the world, yet vindicated and acquitted when He was raised from the dead, He is at the right hand of God, defending the innocence credited to al who appeal to Him for justification (Romans 8:31-34). (TLSB)

Using the same words as in 50:7, the Servant reiterates his confidence that “the Lord Yahweh will help me.” This time, though, he adds the emphatic “behold.” Because he is vindicated (50:8), no one will be able to condemn him. (CC)

Charged with the sins of the world, yet vindicated and acquitted when He was raised from the dead, He “is at the right hand of God,” defending the innocence credited to all who appeal to Him for justification (Rm 8:31–34) (TLSB)

wear out like a garment; the moths. Those who falsely accuse the righteous succumb to moths in 51:8 (i.e., they will be destroyed). (CSB)

The Servant’s enemies will be as fragile and vulnerable as cloth, which even a tiny moth can destroy. (TLSB)

Those who disregard Yahweh’s acquittal of his Servant will decay, just as clothing wears out and is devoured by a moth (cf. Hos. 5:12; Job 4:19; Heb. 1:11-12). Employing a different metaphor to state the same truth, Jesus asks, “have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’” (Mt. 21:42 ESV, quoting Ps. 118:22-23). He then warns, “And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him” (Mt. 21:44 ESV; cf. Is. 8:14; 28:16; Dan. 2:34). Building a life while ignoring the Cornerstone invites ruin. (CC)

That is, they will perish little by little through constant use rather than all of a sudden, but room will be given them for repentance. In another place we read: “My face is indeed weakened like a garment chewed up by worms.” Thus also our enemies will perish but “the word of our God will stand forever” (Is. 40:8). (Luther)

Job 4:19 “how much more those who live in houses of clay, whose foundations are in the dust, who are crushed more readily than a moth!

Job 13:28 “So man wastes away like something rotten, like a garment eaten by moths.

Job 27:18 “The house he builds is like a moth’s cocoon, like a hut made by a watchman.

Isaiah 51:8 “For the moth will eat them up like a garment; the worm will devour them like wool. But my righteousness will last forever, my salvation through all generations.”

Hosea 5:12 “I am like a moth to Ephraim, like rot to the people of Judah.”

Matthew 6:19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.”

Charges may be hurled at Him. They fall to the ground, repelled by the shield of divine protection. (Eph 6:16 – shield of faith). In fact, in the end not He but they will wear out and come to ruin, as the expressive figure indicates. A rare measure of confidence and steadfastness are displayed here, a steadfastness not based on inflated opinions of self but upon a divinely wrought certainty necessary for the fulfillment of the task assigned by the Servant’s Lord. It must be admitted that the Servant depicted is a very striking figure whose potential is met fully only in Jesus Christ. (Leupold)

EPISTLE – Philippians 2:5-11

Christ's Example of Humility

5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

2:5-11 The Epistle for today is pivotal, providing a bridge from death to life while giving us both promise and reason for following where Christ leads. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

2:5 *have this mind...in Christ.* In spite of all that is unique and radically different about the person and work of Christ (see vv. 6–11), Christians are to have his attitude of self-sacrificing humility and love for others (see vv. 2–4; Mt 11:29; Jn 13:12–17). (CSB)

The Beck Bible is preferred: “Think just as Christ Jesus thought.” (Exegetical Notes – Bult)

Paul presents the imperative to think with our minds as Christ thought with His. A soul regenerated in Christ’s image (Titus 3:4-7) has the revelation of Christ through the Word. (TLSB)

There is some disagreement over how to translate the word *phroneō*, “to think.” The series of imperatives in the verses preceding may explain why some manuscripts included “for” at the beginning of this verse, understanding that the mind of Christ in us would explain compliance with the imperatives. For our purposes we might let the tension stand and consider the verb as both indicative and imperative. The presence of God’s inspired Word in our lives, confirmed in our Baptism, means that we do have the mind of Christ. The fact that our regenerate, inspired soul dwells within a contrary human nature means that it is imperative that we continually reorient our thinking to match that of our Savior. The verses that follow are Gospel in nature but also provide an insurmountable logic that is effective in Christian apologetics. No other religious system even begins to suggest a parallel to Christ, true God who became incarnate, provided redemption for the whole world, and rose from the dead. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2) The more they are in Christ and Christ is in them, the more Christ-like and unselfish they will be in their attitudes and actions. (PBC)

As if the Apostle would say, “All that I asked of all of you is to be meek and humble so as to be of one mind and one soul, all that you see exemplified in the person and conduct of our Lord. I would like to have you cultivate a mind that is similar to the mind found in Christ. (Stoekhardt)

2:6–11 The poetic, even lyric, character of these verses is apparent. Many view them as an early Christian hymn (see note on Col 3:16), taken over and perhaps modified by Paul. If so, they nonetheless express his convictions. The passage treats Christ’s humiliation (vv. 6–8) and exaltation (vv. 9–11).

Note from Colossians 3:16 – *psalms, hymns and spiritual songs*. Some of the most important doctrines were expressed in Christian hymns preserved for us now only in Paul’s letters (1:15–20; Eph 5:14; Php 2:6–11; 1Ti 3:16). “Psalms” refers to the OT psalms (see Lk 20:42; 24:44; Ac 1:20; 13:33), some of which may have been set to music by the church. “Psalm” could also describe a song newly composed for Christian worship (cf. 1Co 14:26, where “hymn” is lit. “psalm” in the Greek text). A “hymn” was a song of praise, especially used in a celebration (see

Mk 14:26; Heb 2:12; see also Ac 16:25), much like the OT psalms that praised God for all that he is. A “song” recounted the acts of God and praised him for them (see Rev 5:9; 14:3; 15:3), much like the OT psalms that thanked God for all that he had done. See note on Eph 5:19.

2:6-8 Paul repeats the Greek term *morphe*, “form,” and also uses *schema*, “manner,” or “shape.” The Son of God took human form, a body like ours except without sin. Note how here and elsewhere Paul’s account of Jesus’ life fits readily with the historical accounts in the Gospels. (TLSB)

2:6 What follows is truly a remarkable passage. Here Christ is presented as our model, our example in lowliness. But at the same time this passage is very important for the doctrine of the person and two states of Christ. Christ is our example in lowliness. That’s ethical. But we cannot imitate His states or saving work. This text reminds us of the necessity of preaching the person and two states of Christ. This also reminds us of the necessity of preaching the person and work of Christ for justification and sanctification. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

though – nuparchao – *come into existence* – (*be present* or *at hand*); expletively, to *exist* (as copula or subordinate to an adjective, participle, adverb or preposition, or as auxiliary to principal verb):—after behave, live. – Implies his pre-existent deity, previous to his birth, and his continued deity afterwards.

form of God. Affirming that Jesus is fully God. (CSB)

We need to be careful here (as many translations are) not to misunderstand “form” (*hē morphē*) as form only without content. The Son of God does not simply bear the form of God. Rather, “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power” (Heb 1:3); “In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (Col 1:19). The fact that Jesus is God made it both possible and necessary for him to empty himself on our behalf—possible because no one and nothing could ever really strip him of his divine nature, necessary because the essence of his character is love. We see this clearly in John 13, when Jesus sets aside his garments (as he set aside his divine prerogatives) in order to offer the most humble of services, washing his disciples’ feet. Contrast Jesus with the competitive and self-serving nature of people. Our unwillingness to serve others betrays an absence of certainty about our nature. This has only become worse since Darwin and evolutionary deception has stripped humanity of any kind of inherent dignity as the crown of God’s creative work. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

From all eternity Jesus has been one with the Father, truly God. His eternal existence as God is unshakeable and unchangeable. In Jesus’ incarnation the human nature Jesus assumed shared in all the characteristics of His divine nature. The two natures are now perfectly united. After the incarnation the Bible speaks of one divine-human Christ, the God-man. (PBC)

form. Essential form, the sum of those qualities that make God specifically God. (CSB)

As the Son of God, Jesus is God (Col 1:15). Not simply appearance. (TLSB)

equality with God. The status and privileges that inevitably follow from being in very nature God. (CSB)

Jesus, as the true Son of God, cannot be less than fully God. He is equal with His Father according to His divine nature. (TLSB)

Jesus is indeed true God, equal with the Father in power, authority and majesty, and He possesses all the characteristics of God. This He clearly demonstrated during His earthly ministry. Here was a man who read the hearts of men, feed multitudes, control the weather, cast out devils, heal the sick and even raise the dead. Those who observed Him at closest range had to declare, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus was and is in very nature God. (PBC)

a thing to be grasped.† Something to be forcibly retained—the glory Christ had with the Father before his incarnation. But he did not consider that high position to be something he could not give up. (CSB)

The Greek word means “a thing for self-glorification.” (Exegetical Notes – Bult)

Fully God, He felt no necessity to cling to the honor or privileges that were His as God’s Son (John 13:3-4). God grants us a similar ability ourselves in the service of others, because we are His children too. (TLSB)

anagnōskō *plunder* (properly concrete):—robbery. This divine equality was not something Jesus had to steal or even strive for.

In Paul’s day victorious generals and other public figures would frequently honor themselves and their achievements by using their “moment in the sun” to erect monuments to themselves and their achievements. Today, too, the great men of the world frequently use the privileges and trappings of their offices to enhance their reputations, further their careers, perhaps even line their pockets. (PBC)

Jesus, though He was God in very nature, did not appear on earth to glorify Himself. He did not look for His own advantage. Nor did He arbitrarily use the divine privileges and powers He possessed to satisfy passing fancies or to gain earthly fame and power. (PBC)

2:7 emptied himself. Lit. “emptied himself.” He did this, not by giving up deity, but by laying aside his glory (see Jn 17:5) and submitting to the humiliation of becoming man (see 2Co 8:9). Jesus is truly God and truly man. Another view is that he emptied himself, not of deity itself, but of its prerogatives—the high position and glory of deity. (CSB)

This verse begins the gradual descent of Jesus in his redemptive service to us—first taking the form of a servant, then humbling himself in death, then even lower by dying on a cross (as one accursed from God). Notice once again, that “form of a servant” means really a servant! The whole life of Christ as recorded in the Gospels is one of constant service to others (so that he had no time even to eat). The Son of God’s adoption of a human nature is beautifully and fully considered in the Book of Hebrews; because he was human he can sympathize and can be a faithful and merciful High Priest for us (e.g., Heb 4:14–16). “Being found in human form” (v 8) reminds us that Isaiah had prophesied that the Messiah would be so fully human as to be unrecognizable: “He had no form or majesty that we should look at him” (Is 53:2). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

“[The Son of Man] was received into God when He was conceived of the Holy Spirit in His mother’s womb, and His human nature was personally united with the Son of the Highest. Christ always had this majesty according to the personal union. Yet He abstained from using it in the state of His humiliation, and because of this He truly increased in all wisdom and favor with God and men. Therefore, He did not always use this majesty, but only when it pleased Him.” (FC Ep. VIII 15-16). (TLSB)

The Beck Bible says, “But He emptied Himself, made Himself a slave, became like other human beings. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

During His earthly ministry Jesus emptied Himself of the full and constant use of all the prerogatives of His divinity. He laid aside the unlimited exercise of His power and did not always use or demand His rights as God. (PBC)

form of a servant. Emphasizes the full reality of his servant identity (see Mt 20:28). As a servant, he was always submissive to the will of the Father. (CSB)

Jesus was, in every way, completely a servant to those around Him. (TLSB)

doulos a *slave* (literally or figuratively, involuntarily or voluntarily; frequently therefore in a qualified sense of *subjection* or *subserviency*):—bond (-man), servant.

It was as if He covered the glory of His divine majesty with the tattered rags of a beggar. He became altogether lowly. He became like every other human being – lowlier, in fact, than most – in His earthly manner of living. Though He Himself was sinless, He assumed human nature in the weakened condition in which we have it, burdened with the consequences of sin. Although He is the Lord of the universe, He was born in a stable. He never possessed earthly property or wealth. He was despised by many of His contemporaries. He placed Himself under the demands of God’s law. (PBC)

born in the likeness of men – Not mere resemblance. He was conceived as a man like any other man, except without sin. (TLSB)

2:8 *found in human form.* Not only was Jesus “like” a human being (v. 7), but he also took on the actual outward characteristics of a man (see Jn 1:14; Ro 8:3; Heb 2:17). (CSB)

Jesus shared all the characteristics of a human being. (TLSB)

humbled himself. See v. 7; 2Co 8:9. (CSB)

The Son of God humbled himself; true love is given freely and at one’s own expense. Even as the Son of God did not think equality with God something to cling to selfishly, so also he did not think that he was above enduring death for the sake of his beloved ones. Now we see that this process of humbling himself to effect our redemption knew no limits, so that he humbled himself even to die the most accursed of all deaths. Mention of the cross here brings up all the significant imagery of the devil, who once overcome by a tree, now being overcome by a tree; the First Adam failing before a tree, the Second Adam winning absolute victory on a tree (Rom 5:12–21); he became accursed so that we might be blessed (Gal 3:13–14). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

obedient. How Jesus humbled himself (cf. Heb 5:7–8). A “servant” (v. 7) obeys. (CSB)

Jesus put all His thoughts, words, and actions under the direction of His Father’s will. (TLSB)

to the point of death. Stresses both the totality and the climax of Jesus’ obedience. (CSB)

In a person of Christ, God truly died. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

on a cross. Heightens Jesus' humiliation; he died as someone cursed (see Gal 3:13; Heb 122). Crucifixion was the most degrading kind of execution that could be inflicted on a person.(CSB)

stauros – a *stake* or *post* (as *set* upright), that is, (specifically) a *pole* or *cross* (as an instrument of capital punishment); figuratively *exposure to death*, that is, *self denial*; by implication the *atonement* of Christ:—cross. – The kind of death he submitted himself to amazes believers, confounds unbelievers: this was the style of execution reserved by the Romans for slaves, foreigners, and barbarians – never Roman citizens.

The most despised and cursed death. According to OT Law, being hung on a tree meant you were cut off from God. You were left there all day as an example to others (cf. Dt. 21:22-23). The Romans crucified criminals by the main entry roads into a city in order to humiliate them and to warn those who entered not to make the same mistake. (TLSB)

In OT Israel, after a wrongdoer had been put to death, the civil laws prescribed that his dead body be nailed to a post or a tree. This was to impress on the people that that individual, by his transgression, had suffer the ultimate curse of being cut off from God and His believing people. If in the sight of God, than hanging of a dead body signified His curse, how much more would the hanging of a living person be considered a curse, especially when that person was experiencing anguish beyond description. How deliberately and heavily the words fall as the apostle describes the ultimate humiliation of the God-man: EVEN DEATH ON A CROSS. (PBC)

2:9 *therefore - dio*, “therefore; that is why.” The first word of this verse is the pivot and shows the proper relationship between man (in this case the Son of Man) and God: man humbles himself in submission to God and love of neighbor, and God exalts man as is right. What we give away for the benefit of others God restores again, but if we would keep what God has given, how can God give any more to us? Remember that “name” (*to onoma*) is not just an empty title, but includes all the power and prerogatives of a being. Jesus is not only Creator but also now Redeemer. This truth is the basis and justification of v 10. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

highly exalted. See Mt 28:18; Ac 2:33; cf. Isa 52:13. (CSB)

auferupsoo to *elevate above* others, that is, *raise* to the *highest* position:—highly exalt. (qv)

The Apostle's Creed lists the various events of Jesus' exaltation: “He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.” What a glorious victory these words describe. Jesus, our Savior, having successfully completed His redemptive work for us, openly triumphed over the forces of hell. Death had to relinquish its hold on Him. Earth could no longer contain Him. Heaven opened its doors to receive Him. Jesus, our victorious Savior, now holds in His hands the reins of the universe. He rules all things in heaven and on earth in the interest of His believers, and He will come again to end this age, judge the world, and take His believers to be with Him and to share His glory in eternal life. (PBC)

the name ... above every name. Reference doubtless is to the office or rank conferred on Jesus—his glorious position, not his proper name (cf. Eph 1:21; Heb 1:4–5). (CSB)

In ancient times, people were given names to describe them. The name of Jesus describes the essence of who He is: “salvation is of the Lord.” There is no other savior or means of salvation. “After His resurrection, He entirely laid aside the form of a servant, but not human nature, and was established in the full use, manifestation, and declaration of the divine majesty. In this way He entered His glory” (FC Ep VIII 16). (TLSB)

His name, spoken with contempt by His enemies, especially by those who condemned Him to death as a blasphemer, is the only “name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” Only through Jesus’ name, and through faith in His name and the gospel revelation which stands behind it, can sinners be saved. (PBC)

2:10–11 *bow ... confess.* Cf. Isa 45:23. God’s design is that all people everywhere should worship and serve Jesus as Lord. Ultimately all will acknowledge him as Lord (see Ro 14:9), whether willingly or not. (CSB)

All created beings must and will confess Jesus as Lord: The saints and angels in heaven, all human beings on earth, even the demons and the damned in hell. (PBC)

God the Father exalts the Son to the place that is rightly his (see last week’s Gospel) so that creation relates rightly to him. When every knee bows in submission and every tongue confesses the truth of Christ, then creation will experience paradise. Life is found in God’s design. Life is conveyed in the Word of the Lord. When all is right in God’s creation for all eternity, then God will be glorified as is proper to him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

Bow is synonymous with worship toward God (Ex. 4:31; 34:8; Ps. 95:6; 1 Sam 1:28; see note Ex 33:10) or respect and service for a human being (Gn. 33:3; 43:26-28; 1 Sam 20:41; 28:14; Est 3:2). God expressly forbade bowing to false gods (Ex 20:4-5). People also bowed to (1) greet someone (Gen 18:2; 19:1), (2) signal humility and repentance (Ezr 9:5; 10:1, and (3) express thanks (Gen 24:52). Bows were done in a variety of ways (1 Ch 29:20; 1 Kg 18:42; Ne 8:6) and likely included tilting the head, tilting the upper body, kneeling with one’s face to the ground, or lying prostrate. The more elaborate the bow, the greater the expression of devotion or emotion (Gn. 33:3). (TLSB p. 1276)

under the earth – This is a figure of speech that refers to the souls of those who have gone not to heaven, but to damnation in the “lower regions” (1 Peter 3:18-20). (TLSB)

2:11 *Jesus Christ is Lord* – An early creed. See p. 1975. Jesus (Greek) or Joshua (Hebrew) is the name given to the Son conceived by the Holy Spirit (Mt. 1:21) in the Virgin Mary. Christ (Greek) or Messiah (Hebrew) is the title of the One whom God promised to send to save His people. This Jesus, who is the Christ, demonstrated Himself to be Lord over all His nature, life, death, and resurrection. No one is Lord over Him, but He is Lord over all. (TLSB)

This verse emphasizes what was said in verse 10. It is a comfort for us to know that every rational creature, be that in heaven, on earth or of the underworld, cannot but make this confession. That says two things to us: (1) God is glorified by the person and work of our Lord Jesus. Therefore Jesus ought have our utmost confidence. (2) With Jesus as our example we ought humble ourselves as Paul here tells us to do. And if we so do, although what we do is so foolish in the eyes of the world, the Lord will not forget us. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

2:1–11 Paul couples the imperatives of a Christian life with a description of Christ, who makes that life possible. We are certainly not lords, nor have we any excuse for refusing to honor Jesus Christ as Lord. Yet the fulfillment of the imperative to live like Christ is supported by all that Christ gives freely: the encouragement, comfort, love, and mind of Christ, along with the participation of the Spirit. • Dear Lord Jesus, place firmly in our minds and hearts both who You are and what You are so that we may proclaim Your grace and image to others. Amen. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – John 12:20-43

Some Greeks Seek Jesus

20 Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. 21 So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” 22 Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. 23 And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

12:20-33 The mood of the text is one of somber anticipation. Chronologically, the text occurs between the triumphant entry into Jerusalem and Jesus’ washing of the disciples’ feet. The narrative is rapidly moving to the events of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, so there is an ominous expectancy in this passage. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

The intent of the text is to have the readers seek and serve (v 26) Jesus only as they are drawn to his hour of death, his glorification of being lifted up on a cross. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

12:20-23 It is the coming of the Greeks that is important, not only their conversation with Jesus. The Greeks were probably “God-fearers”—Gentiles attracted to Judaism but not ready to convert and accept the requirements of the Law such as Sabbath observance and circumcision. Some think they could have been actual converts or proselytes. Regardless, they came to worship in Jerusalem during the Passover celebration. On the Jewish Pentecost or Feast of Weeks, there were people in Jerusalem from “every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5) “both Jews and converts to Judaism” (Acts 2:11). The arrival of Gentiles seeking him prompts Jesus to declare that his hour has now come. It is time for him to be glorified in death and resurrection for the whole world. There is no turning back. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

Some commentators are of the opinion that this episode happened in the afternoon of Palm Sunday. It is found only in John and is found right after Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. Others feel that it occurred on Tuesday morning, two days later. In any event, all agree that Jesus was in the Temple. (Buls)

12:20 *Greeks*. Probably “God-fearers,” people attracted to Judaism by its monotheism and morality, but repelled by its nationalism and requirements such as circumcision. They worshiped in the synagogues but did not become proselytes. (CSB)

Probably Greek-speaking Gentiles from a place like the Decapolis. (TLSB)

Greeks" meaning Gentiles. "Who were among those who customarily went up." They were among the God-fearing Gentiles who worshipped in Jerusalem at the time of the Passover. Compare Acts 10:1.22.35; 13:16.26.43.50; 16:14; 17:4.17; 18:7. They came to worship. (Buls)

12:21 Philip. A Greek name, which may be why they came to this disciple (though he was not the only one of the Twelve to have a Greek name). (CSB)

Perhaps because Philip had a Gk name and came from an area near the Decapolis. (TLSB)

This is narrative. They must have been acquainted with Philip. Bengel suggests that perhaps they always lodged with Philip in Bethsaida on their journey to Jerusalem. They simply request to meet Jesus to become acquainted with Him. This request must have proceeded from faith, for they surely knew that the Jewish authorities hated Jesus. It has been suggested that perhaps these Greeks were in the crowd which went out to meet Jesus, John 12:13, but we don't know. (Buls)

They were acquainted with Philip, since his home was in Bethsaida, and they may have met him often in the North. (Kretzmann)

He was from out of town (Bethsaida, in northern Galilee), so they may have felt more comfortable approaching him. (PBC)

to see. Means "to have an interview with." After v. 22 John records no more about these Greeks. He regarded their coming as important but not their conversation with Jesus. Jesus came to die for the world, and the coming of these Gentiles indicates the scope of the effectiveness of his approaching crucifixion. (CSB)

For that moment, the request was symbolic. They represented the Gentile nations and the fulfillment of the messianic promise of a light for the nations (Isaiah 60:3). It reveals the desires of people impressed by God's law and made aware of God's Messiah. It is the spirit of Christians to this day who never stop searching the Scriptures to learn of Him. (PBC)

12:22 For some reason, Philip hesitated to speak immediately with Jesus. Here Andrew showed the same missionary zeal he had shown earlier (1:41). (TLSB)

Many commentators quote Bengel who says at this point:

A prelude is here given of the kingdom of God which is about to pass from the Jews (exclusively) to the Gentiles. (Buls)

Farrar: When Jesus was born, Chaldeans from the East had sought His cradle, and now Greeks and sons of the West came to His cross. (Buls)

Fahling: In this request Jesus saw an indication of His glorification, which consisted in His being acknowledged by men of all nations, as had been prophesied. (Buls)

Hendriksen: Andrew and Philip, hesitating to *offend* the Greeks, also hesitating to *encourage* them, place the request of the Greeks before Jesus. (Buls)

Jesus had told His disciples not to go to the Gentiles, Matthew 10:5, and that He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Matthew 15:24. But Jesus Himself had foretold the bringing in of the

Gentiles at John 10:16. John 12:20-22 reveals the Greeks, Philip, Andrew and Jesus as very tactful, but forthright nonetheless. A great truth is being introduced. Whether these Greeks actually met Jesus is not stated. (Buls)

Lenski: We hear nothing further about the Greeks. . . John is not telling the story of these Greeks but of Jesus.

12:23 *Jesus answered them* – This is apparently to Philip and Andrew rather than the Greeks. We are never told whether these Greeks met with Jesus, who is now fully focused on His challenges in Jerusalem. (TLSB)

The hour has come. The hour to which everything else led. (CSB)

The antecedent of is the two disciples. "The hour has come" in the sense of the occasion of Jesus' suffering and death was found at John 7:30; 8:20. At this point it occurs in John with greater frequency. Compare 12:27; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1. The word "glorified" covers the suffering, death, resurrection and final ascension of the Son of man. The Son of man clothed God in splendor by His atoning work which brings the Gentiles into the Church. (Buls)

Until now, we have become accustomed to hearing that Jesus' hour had not yet come (7:30; 8:20). But now it had. He, the essence of humanity, had come to Jerusalem to die for the lost humanity and rise again in glory. Jesus came to sacrifice Himself for the salvation of the Greek as well as the Jews. (PBC)

glorified. Jesus was speaking about his death on the cross and his subsequent resurrection and exaltation (see notes on v. 41; 11:4; 13:31). (CSB)

12:24-26 The principle of the kernel of wheat is that it must die to produce fruit. Just so, Jesus must die. The fruit is those who look to Christ and eternal life. They refuse to satisfy their desires and needs apart from God's will and follow Jesus in humble service. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

12:24 *truly, truly I say to you* – Here is another "I tell you the truth," so frequent in John, (twenty-four times) introducing a very important statement. (Buls)

if it dies, it produces. The principle of life through death is seen in the plant world. The kernel must perish as a kernel if there is to be a plant. (CSB)

Now follow two present general statements which are axiomatic and paradoxical. To bring out the axiom add "ever" to each protasis and "always" to each apodosis. It is a principle of nature that if a seed does not die, there will be no fruit but that if it dies there will be much fruit. The point of comparison is clear, but applies to Jesus only. No other human being ever produced much fruit by dying, none other than Jesus Christ. His death brought much fruit, especially among the Gentiles. (Buls)

Here begins Jesus' answer to the request of the Greeks. He did not spend His time exchanging amenities with these visitors. He spoke truths for all generations of men. (Buls)

This emphasizes the necessity of Jesus' death as the way to glorification and the blessing of many disciples. According to the time reckoning in John, Jesus rose from the dead on the 16th of Nisan, the day barley firstfruits were offered at the temple. (TLSB)

Similarly, Jesus would not bear the fruit of His mission from God unless, He first died. All His miraculous signs had no eternal benefit without the miracle of the cross and the empty tomb. The Son of Man had to die for a spiritual harvest to come, the harvest of souls for eternity. (PBC)

Jesus' dying would have its effect on all who follow Him. We too in a sense must die. We don't die as a substitute for others as Jesus did. But in believing in Him as our Substitute, we die with Him. (PBC)

12:25 *the man who hates his life ... will keep it.* To love one's life here and now—to concentrate on one's own success—is to lose what matters (cf. Mt 16:24–25; Mk 8:34–35; Lk 9:23–24). Supremely, of course, the principle is seen in the cross of Jesus. (CSB)

Jesus applied the image in v 24 to the life of His followers (cf Mk 8:34). Idolatrous love of self brings a person under God's judgment. (TLSB)

Verse 24 applies to Jesus only. Verses 25-26 apply to all people, Jews and Gentiles. Note that both verses contain two statements each. The universal atonement underlies these two verses. Both verses contain warning and promise. (Buls)

In verse 25 Jesus is comparing two types of people, which include all human beings. On this verse cf. Luke 14:26-27. He is speaking of a selfish, temporal love. To love one's soul means to live for self-gratification and avoidance of suffering. "Hate" does not denote the hatred of the flesh but the hatred of the new man. This involves one immediately in repentance, faith, the new life, also suffering. Compare Matthew 16:25. (Buls)

Nothing frightens the Christian so much as the thought of losing his own soul. Nothing comforts the Christian quite so much as the preservation of his soul for everlasting life. (Buls)

Ylvisaker: To love is here the equivalent of holding on, clinging to, being unwilling to part with. To hate is to give up cheerfully, turn away, or separate from. (Buls)

Kretzmann: It is one of the demands of Christian discipleship that all followers of Christ die unto this present life, with all it has to offer, daily. Compare Matthew 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; 17:33. (Buls)

Hendriksen: The solemn truth stated in verse 24 applies to Christ, to him alone. Nevertheless, there is an analogous principle which operates in the sphere of men. It is the one stated in verses 25 and 26. (Buls)

Lenski: The Christian is ready, contrary to his natural inclinations and desires in his life here on earth, to wound, grieve, deny, crucify, mortify self in repentance and sanctification. . . He shall thus get out of his natural life what God intends him to get and at the same time attain the life eternal. (Buls)

This is well said, because Jesus is not teaching asceticism. (Buls)

But herein is an admonition also for the disciples, who are pledged to follow their

When Jesus warns against loving our lives, He means putting this earthly life first. It's a warning against self-centeredness. Those who put all their affection on this life and what they can get out of it will one day die and lose it all. (PBC)

hates. Love for God must be such that all other loves are, by comparison, hatred. (CSB)

Semitic idiom indicating preference; the opposite of sinful self-adulation. (TLSB)

Note from TLSB Romans 9:13: *Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated*. Refers to the nations of Israel and Edom. The “love/hate” language emphasizes preference of one over another, not literal hatred (compare Gn 29:30 to 29:31).

Jesus means putting Him and the life He gives first. When we believe in Jesus and have eternal life in Him, worldly living loses its attraction. Everything worldly carries sin’s taint and becomes hateful. (PBC)

12:26 Just as Christ was ready to face death, so must His disciples be, no matter who they are or where they come from. (TLSB)

Note that both of these conditional sentences are general, covering all instances, an open invitation to both Jews and Gentiles. He died for all. "Serves" here is wider in meaning than mere religious service. "Serve" is a twenty-four hour a day matter, which involves a person in constant use of Law and Gospel. "Must follow," though an imperative, is an invitation, an invitation to trust, serve, suffer. And then follows a wonderful promise. "Where -- there" are correlative adverbs of place. Read John 7:34 and 8:21 where Jesus warned His enemies that they would *not be able* to come. But here at John 12:26; 14:3; 17:24 He does not say "you will be able" because it is purely a gift of Jesus. (Buls)

In what sense will The Father honor the "service" of Jesus? Bengel suggests that this corresponds to verse 23, the glorification of the Son of man. Just as the Son of man was glorified through suffering, death and resurrection, so the server will be honored with final glorification. (Buls)

"My servant" is a fellow-heir with Christ, Romans 8:17. In verse 26 Jesus is not merely prophesying, but stating the certainty of everlasting life for the servant. (Buls)

Before we leave this section we refer to Solomon's prayer for the Gentiles at 1 Kings 8:41-43. In its highest sense, the prayer of Solomon was answered here in John 12:20-33 when these Greeks, as representatives of all Gentiles, were knocking at the door of the Kingdom, to use an expression from Stoeckhardt, who says: "The hour that Christ should enter into glory through His death was at hand, because the Gentiles were knocking at the door and desiring a portion of Christ's kingdom." (Buls)

12:20–26 When some Greeks want to see Jesus, He uses the occasion to proclaim His death and the fruit it will bear. Too often we are tempted to think that we are really “living” when we are indulging in life’s sinful pleasures. Christ promises everlasting life to all who deny themselves and trust in Him. He shows us the meaning of abundant life. • O God, as Your baptized child, let me consider myself “dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rm 6:11). Amen. (TLSB)

The Son of Man Must Be Lifted Up

27 “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” 29 The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” 30 Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine. 31 Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” 33 He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. 34 So the crowd answered him, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say

that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” 35 So Jesus said to them, “The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. 36 While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.”

12:27 troubled. John’s equivalent to the agony in Gethsemane described in the other Gospels. (CSB)

Christ knew that the moment of His death was at hand. (TLSB)

Note that four of these words are quoted from the LXX, Psalm 6:4 (3), a penitential Psalm. Psalm 6 is spoken by the penitent sinner because of his own sins. Here Jesus uses it because of what He is about to suffer because of all men's sins. "Is troubled" is perfect tense because Jesus' soul has been disturbed for some time but the intensity is growing as He approaches His death. Jesus announced His impending death at least three times (cf. Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22 for the first announcement). The first announcement occurred at least nine months before this time. (Buls)

By the way, the word "hour" including this instance, occurs seventeen times in John from this point on. In the majority of cases it has to do with His suffering and death. (It occurs here again twice in verse 31) (Buls)

"What shall I say" is deliberative subjunctive. It denotes deep emotion, not a mere request for information. KJV and NEB make the sentence a statement. The others make it a question, as does Nestle/Aland. It is surely a question: "Shall I say: 'Father, save me from this hour?'" AAT gives the sense: "Father, save Me from what is going to happen? No! I came to suffer this now." "No" is clearly "No!" The situation is much like in the Garden of Gethsemane, Matthew 26:38ff. (Buls)

"This reason" though it has no expressed antecedent, means "For this very reason, namely, to die for the world." He says "No!" to "save me," just mentioned, and "Yes!" to His purpose. "I've come" denotes Jesus' willing obedience. (Buls)

Kretzmann: Every Christian may say a similar prayer when the hour of tribulation comes upon him; only he must never set his own will above the will of his heavenly Father. . . Jesus corrects His prayer by asking that the work for which He came into the world continue. (Buls)

Verse 27 reveals two things: Jesus' intense agony and His willing obedience, no matter what the cost. (Buls)

Jesus’ condition (the verb is perfect tense) is one of turmoil. Interpretation of the question in that verse is controverted. It could be a hypothetical/rhetorical question, or it could be an actual prayer Jesus immediately repudiates. Either way, his emphatic declaration is that he do the Father’s will. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

Jesus had to come to Jerusalem to die. As true man, He was troubled by what He faced. The triumphant procession did not change the reality He knew was coming. He already felt the burden we associate with Gethsemane. He opened His soul for us to look in. Jesus was not a robot, heading for the scrap heap without feeling. As true God, He did not simply switch off all sorrow and suffering. His sufferings would be intense beyond measure because of our sin. (PBC)

this hour. Jesus faced the prospect of becoming sin (or a sin offering) for sinful people (2Co 5:21). He considered praying for God to save him from this death, but refused to pray it, because the very reason he had come was to die. (CSB)

Still the God-man never wavered from His assigned path. He did not cry out in human frailty for the Father to save Him from His ordeal. He had come from heaven for this very purpose, prepared for this time. He was there to bring glory to God. (PBC)

The thought of the coming ordeal, in a way, filled the soul of Christ with dread, He was deeply moved and agitated at the prospect. He felt something of the dread and fear of death. For Jesus was true man, whose flesh and blood shrank from the idea of death. Death is a judgment of God upon sins and sinners. To die in the stead of all men, as their substitute, and thus as the greatest sinner of all times, was a thought which filled the soul of Jesus with dread. He hardly knows what to say in this emergency. As though seeking counsel from His disciples, He asks: Shall I say, Father, deliver Me out of this hour? Should He plead to be saved the ordeal which His human nature dreaded? Every Christian may say a similar prayer when the hour of tribulation comes upon him; only he must never set his own will above the will of his heavenly Father. But even the thought of becoming unfaithful to His Father's trust Jesus repudiates, since it is for this reason that He came into this hour. It is the goal and culmination of His life's work. He cannot disappoint His Father at this time. Without His death His life would be fruitless. (Kretzmann)

12:28-33 The glory spoken of by Jesus and the Father is the cross, not outward splendor in the political, social realm. In being lifted up in death, God is present and seen. What appears as Satan's victory is actually his downfall. Certainly, Jesus is glorified in his resurrection and ascension as essential events in the work of salvation. But here the cross is the particular place where God is revealed for us, where God draws us to himself. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 2)

12:28 *Father, glorify your name!* His prayer was not for deliverance but for the Father to be glorified. The voice from heaven gave the answer. (CSB)

The Father had already glorified Christ through His incarnation and earthly ministry (esp miracles and signs); now He was about to glorify Him again through His death and resurrection. (TLSB)

Note the word "glorify" for the second time. First, verse 27, in agony. Here in determination. The name of God is His revelation of Himself through Jesus. Jesus asks that revelation to be clothed in splendor by His suffering and dying. The Father had glorified His name, His revelation, by Jesus' incarnation, His life, miracles, baptism, preaching and transfiguration. (Buls)

The first "I have glorified" denotes approval, and second "will glorify" offers comfort and promise to Jesus. Commentators point out that this is the third word of the Father publicly about Jesus. The first was at His baptism, the second at His transfiguration. On this read John 17:4.5. Jesus is very God of very God, incarnate. The Father addresses Jesus as both human and divine. (Buls)

a voice came from heaven – The Father answered Jesus' prayer aloud from heaven. His name had been and would be glorified. By sending His Son in the flesh and through His Son's miraculous signs, the Father received glory (1:14). In the events to come, Christ's work of salvation – His death, resurrection and ascension – would most assuredly glorify God's name further. (PBC)

12:29 *thundered* – God's voice was audible to all, but not everyone identified it or understood it (cf. Ex 19:16,19). (TLSB)

It is clear that the crowd standing there heard something but did not understand. There were two opinions indicating that they discussed it. (Buls)

The ignorant Jews had heard the sound, but had not understood the words. And so they expressed their opinion, some thinking that there had been a clap of .thunder, others, that an angel had spoken with Jesus. (Kretzmann)

12:30 *voicc came for your sake* – The crowd needed to hear the voice as a sign that a truly cosmic even was being set in motion, the confrontation God had predicted in Eden (Genesis 3:15). (PBC)

Hendriksen thinks this means "Not exclusively for my sake has this voice occurred, but also for your sake." That may be, for the Father's voice surely strengthened Jesus. In any case it shows Jesus' great love for His disciples. Jesus assures them that the Father has answered His prayer (cf. 11 :42) and that He (Jesus) is about to do His great vicarious work. Jesus' entire thinking and doing is devoted to saving mankind. (Buls)

He is saying this was said so that they might have this additional evidence and He is the Son of God. (CB)

12:31 *of this world*. The cross was God's judgment on the world. (CSB)

The judgment of this world would be based on the outcome. This judgment is an ongoing process, as people either in faith accept or in unbelief reject Jesus as their Savior. (PBC)

Jesus Himself will be judged a criminal shortly, but here He speaks of the condemnation of Satan and the work of the Holy Spirit (cf 16:8-10). (TLSB)

the ruler of this world. Satan (cf. 16:11). The cross would seem to be his triumph; in fact, it was his defeat. Out of it would flow the greatest good ever to come to the world. (CSB)

A compound sentence. Each member introduced by "now," denoting what will happen presently. Only in this Gospel is Satan called "the ruler of this world." Compare 14:30 and 16:11. In all three cases, Satan is doomed. By causing man to fall into sin, Satan usurped authority over man. But Satan, who rules this world of men, is about to be thrown out. That is the judgment, the moment of crisis, of and for this world. Satan is conquered. Compare Luke 10:18 and Hebrews 2:14. (Buls)

Death is Satan's most fearsome weapon. By dying, Jesus conquered Satan and death. Jesus is speaking about His own death. Read Ephesians 2:1-10. Satan is still hard at work. The Gospel is our only hope. (Buls)

Christ's death on the cross may have appeared to be Satan's triumph, but in fact it spelled his overthrow. (TLSB)

Satan would be driven out as the Seed of the woman emerged as the risen victor. Jesus would break the devil's power over us. (PBC)

The efforts of Satan and wicked men to procure the death of Christ were overruled for the promotion of His glory, the salvation of His people, and the ruin of all who continued to oppose Him. (CB)

12:32 *And I*. Jesus emphasizes what He will experience and do. (TLSB)

lifted up. The cross was the supreme exaltation of Jesus (see notes on v. 41; 13:31). (CSB)

Only in John's Gospel (3:14; 8:28; 12:32,34) is "lifted up" used of Jesus' crucifixion. "Draw" is used of dragging dead weight, e.g. beaching ships or dragging a net of fish to the shore. Jesus used it again and again in John 6 of the Father "dragging" (drawing) people to Jesus. They cannot do it by their own powers. (Compare John 6:44). There the word was used of conversion but here Jesus is using "dragging" of redemption. We think that Lenski errs here when he says: (Buls)

This is the drawing exerted by grace through the means of grace (Word and Sacrament), alike in effectiveness and seriousness for all men, not in any way limited on God's part. . . Jesus is speaking of this universal and unlimited grace only in so far as it succeeds in actually drawing men from the world to himself. (Buls)

all people. Christ will draw people to himself without regard for nationality, ethnic affiliation or status. It is significant that Greek Gentiles were present on this occasion (v. 20). (CSB)

Not that everyone in the world would enter heaven, but Christ would make atonement for everyone's sins and draw people out of every nation to form His Church. (TLSB)

No! Jesus is not speaking of a potentiality, but an actuality. Jesus says: "I will draw all men to myself." This is the universal atonement, not the possibility of conversion. Lenski has real problems not only here but also with John 1:9; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Romans 5:12-21 and other passages. Look at John 12:33. Was the death of Christ for all men a mere potentiality or an actuality? It would be dangerous to say that Christ died for all only potentially. No. He died for all actually. Why then are not all saved? Because many reject what Christ and His cross did for all. Verse 32 must be taken literally without any kind of exegetical adornment. (Buls)

Bengel: 'Draw all men,' even the Gentiles. Satan shall not be able to retain them. He shall give way. Here the answer is given to the request made at verse 21. I WILL DRAW from earth, upwards. By this word a power is indicated in opposition to the prince of the world, who shall no longer detain his captives. (Buls)

Bengel rightly understood verse 32 as universal. Satan was not conquered potentially, but actually. Christ did not die for some men potentially, but for all actually. As Bengel says, here was Jesus' answer to the request of the Greeks. If the Greeks did not hear what Jesus said, Philip and Andrew likely told them what He said. (Buls)

All people have to enter judgment through Jesus. They cannot avoid the significance of the cross. (PBC)

12:33 This is plainly a comment by the Evangelist John. In indirect language, spoken for the benefit of the Greeks, Jesus is speaking of His crucifixion. When Jesus first announced His coming death to the disciples, they were shocked. Jesus likely uses "the kind of" here to soften the idea so they could get used to it. But He spoke in unmistakable terms. (Buls)

12:34 *the Law*. Here seems to mean OT Scripture in general (see note on 10:34), the reference being to passages such as Ps 89:36; 110:4; Isa 9:7; Da 7:14. (CSB)

Scriptural texts prophesying the Messiah's eternal kingdom (e.g., 2Sm 7:13; Ps 89:35-37; Dn 7:13-14). (TLSB)

how can you say – They searched for understanding. They believed from Scripture that the Christ would be eternal (Psalm 110:4; Isaiah 9:6, 7; Ezekiel 37:25; Daniel 7:13, 14). Sadly, for many that meant the Christ would set up an eternal kingdom on earth. It definitely did not make sense to them that the Christ would die. (PBC)

Son of Man. The only place in the Gospels where anyone other than Jesus used the expression, and even here Jesus is being quoted. (CSB)

be lifted up – Crowd evidently understood this as reference to Jesus' execution. (TLSB)

who is this Son of Man – People seem confused about the title's meaning, despite Jesus' emphasis on Himself in v. 32. The question implied, however, that at least some considered it a reference to the Messiah. (TLSB)

12:35–36 *the light.* Light is closely identified with Jesus, as seen from the call to believe in the light. (CSB)

Jesus did not try to explain away their doubts; He just told them to stay with Him while they still could. He called for them to trust in Him. Those people didn't need all their questions answered just then. They needed only to listen and believe. By walking in the light of Jesus, they would be enlightened. They would become light bearers too, shining Christ's light in their lives. (PBC)

While men have opportunities to obtain spiritual knowledge they should diligently improve them, lest their opportunities cease, and they be left to ignorance, darkness, and woe. (CB)

lest darkness overtake you – Believing in Jesus is a matter of utmost urgency. (TLSB)

12:27–36a Christ faces the moment of His glory, confirmed by His Father's voice from heaven: the hour when He would be lifted up on the cross so that He could draw all people to Himself. Now is the day of salvation (2Co 6:2); people ignore it at their great peril. Thanks be to God, Christ remains committed to His mission to save the world in spite of its unbelief. • Father, glorify Your Son and draw us to Him today. Amen. (TLSB)

The Unbelief of the People

When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. 37 Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, 38 so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” 39 Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, 40 “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.” 41 Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. 42 Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

12:36b *he departed* – From Jerusalem or perhaps from the crowd. (TLSB)

12:37 *they still would not believe.* God's ancient people should have responded when God sent his Messiah. They should have seen the significance of the signs he did. (CSB)

The faith of many on Palm Sunday was fickle. Although Jesus had done His miraculous signs in their presence, including the raising of Lazarus, they continued not to believe in Jesus. (PBC)

12:38 *Isaiah might be fulfilled* – Anticipating these days, the prophet Isaiah had asked, “Who has believed our message?” (53:1). Even though the Pharisees feared Jesus’ popularity, in reality the people were rejecting Jesus’ teaching. (PBC)

As Isaiah foretold, the people believed neither the message nor Jesus’ signs (cf. 14:10-11). (TLSB)

12:39-40 As in the days of Isaiah, God’s judgment locked people in their unbelief. They would not believe, so they are condemned to become those who could not believe. (TLSB)

12:39 *could not believe*.† They purposely rejected God and chose evil, and v. 40 explains that God in turn brought on them a judicial blinding of eyes and hardening of hearts. Yet many Jewish leaders did believe in Jesus as the Messiah (v. 42). (CSB)

Many of these people, especially the Jewish leaders, had become hardened in their hearts against Jesus. They didn’t acknowledge the arm of God at work in His miracles. Finally, as He once did with Pharaoh at the time of Israel’s exodus from Egypt, God blinded the eyes of those who refused to see and closed the hearts of those who had locked Jesus out. (PBC)

It is said of Joseph’s brothers that they could not speak peaceably to him (Genesis 37:4); and Christ said to the Jews, “How can you believe, who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only?” (John 5:44) The two things were incompatible. They must cease from the one in order to do the other. So here; as they continue to love and cherish their sins, they could not, continuing this course, embrace the Messiah. The two things could not coexist. This was the reason why they should have renounced the one, and performed the other. But they would not do it. (CB)

12:40 These words from Isa 6:10 are quoted by Jesus (Mt 13:14–15; Mk 4:12; Lk 8:10) and by Paul (Ac 28:26–27). (CSB)

Referring to what was heard. (TLSB)

God has blinded their eyes by presenting to them truths which they would reject, their rejection bringing them into greater darkness. In a similar sense it is said, that Jesus Christ came into the world to set members of families at variance, by leading some to trust in Him, while others on this account opposed them and sought their death. (Matthew 10:21, 35, 36) (CB)

12:41 *saw his glory*. Isaiah spoke primarily of the glory of God (Isa 6:3). John spoke of the glory of Jesus and made no basic distinction between the two, attesting Jesus’ oneness with God. The thought of glory here is complex. There is the idea of majesty, and there is also the idea (which meant so much to John) that Jesus’ death on the cross and his subsequent resurrection and exaltation show his real glory. Isaiah foresaw the rejection of Christ, as the passages quoted (Isa 53:1; 6:10) show. He spoke of the Messiah both in the words about blind eyes and hard hearts, on the one hand, and about healing, on the other. This is the cross and this is glory, for the cross and resurrection and exaltation portray both suffering and healing, rejection and triumph, humiliation and glory. (CSB)

Either directly in a vision or through the prophetic words God gave him. *His glory*. Isaiah either saw the preincarnate Christ or discerned what the Christ would do as the Suffering Servant. (TLSB)

You have heard the familiar verses. Perhaps you have learned them by heart: “He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His stripes we are healed” (Is 53:5). “A bruised reed He will not break” (42:3). He “was numbered with the transgressors; yet He bore the sin of many” (53:12). You have sung the familiar hymns: “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded” (*LSB* 449), “Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted” (*LSB* 451), and “A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth” (*LSB* 438). Some of the more familiar Scripture passages are part of the songs of the Suffering Servant. For centuries, hymn writers have mined the rich imagery of the Servant Songs to create hymns of lasting comfort. (TL*SB* p. 1178)

The Holy Spirit inspired Isaiah to record four separate songs of the Suffering Servant (42:1–9; 49:1–13; 50:4–11; 52:13–53:12). With remarkable clarity, 700 years before the Servant was born, Isaiah vividly portrayed His life from manger to grave to resurrection. He wrote how the Servant, born of a virgin, would atone for the sins of the world with His own suffering and death. No other human could fulfill the mission of the Servant. (TL*SB* p. 1178)

The Servant Is a Humble King

In the Old Testament, the king of Israel, the temple, and the land bear rich theological imagery. We hear of God accomplishing the salvation of His people through His king, dwelling with His people in His temple, and restoring His people to the land promised long ago. Isaiah further defined God’s kingly role as that of a Servant. The Messiah, a royal descendant of King David, would be a King radically different from all previous kings. True, this King would bring forth justice to the Gentiles, even to all the earth (42:1, 4), but He would come quietly and humbly (53:2). This King would come not to be served by His subjects, but to serve them. He would offer His life for all people. (TL*SB* p. 1178)

In the Servant Songs, God provided His prophet Isaiah a glimpse of the future, far beyond the impending judgment of Jerusalem and exile in Babylon. Isaiah wrote about the day when God Himself would dwell in human flesh with His people to serve them and all nations. For example, in ch 49, the Servant Himself speaks of His commission to bring salvation to Israel and to be a light to the Gentiles. He would take the sins of the world—past, present, and future—upon Himself and offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice to make satisfaction for that sin. (TL*SB* p. 1178)

A King like No Other

This King would not draw attention to Himself (42:2). Subjected to great humiliation (52:14), His appearance would startle and amaze other kings (52:15). Despised and rejected by people, He would be a man of sorrows, a man not highly esteemed (53:3). When accused, this innocent King would not defend Himself but would stand silent (53:7). The King would “bring forth justice to the nations” (42:1) in what would appear to be a gross miscarriage of justice, since the guilty would be released and the innocent condemned to die (53:8). (TL*SB* p. 1178)

Scorned by His own people, the Suffering Servant would be worshiped by princes. Despised by the common man, kings would arise to see Him (49:7). This King would be smitten, stricken, and spat upon (53:4). He would be bruised, berated, and beaten (53:5). He would turn His cheek to allow His beard to be pulled and plucked (50:6). Although innocent of violence and deceit, He would be killed with criminals and buried with the wicked and the rich (53:9). Who is like this Servant King? (TL*SB* p. 1178)

Set Apart by the Father

Is 42:1 records the Father’s introduction of this Suffering Servant and His work: “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.” This Servant is the Father’s singular chosen Servant. The Father unhesitatingly acknowledges Him. He is the One elected by the Father for this unique position of honor. He is the One in whom the Father greatly delights. Knowing the difficulty of the mission He has assigned

to this Servant King, the Father confers His Spirit on Him to equip Him for His peculiar work. (TLSB p. 1178)

Centuries after Isaiah completed his prophetic work, when John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River, the Father's voice boomed from heaven with reference to the Servant Song, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Mt 3:17; cf Is 42:1). The Spirit descended from the heavens in the form of a dove and came to rest upon the Son (cf Is 42:1). Later (Lk 4:18), the Suffering Servant began His public ministry by reading the words of Is 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me." Then He proclaimed, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:21). Later, when the Servant turned to Jerusalem and His bloody mission on the cross, the Father again affirmed His pleasure with His Son and His work by saying, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Mt 17:5). (TLSB p. 1178)

The Servant Suffers for You

"But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His stripes we are healed" (Is 53:5). With these poetic words, Isaiah drives the prophecy home. He explains why it was necessary for the Servant King to suffer. The almighty God took on human flesh in order that He might be humiliated, tortured, and killed to take away your sins! He was wounded—for you. He was crucified to bring about peace with God—for you. Through His work as the Suffering Servant, He brings healing—for you. Who is like this Servant King? Who is like this God? (TLSB p. 1178)

Tell me, ye who hear Him groaning,
Was there ever grief like His?
Friends through fear His cause disowning,
Foes insulting His distress;
Many hands were raised to wound Him,
None would intervene to save;
But the deepest stroke that pierced Him
Was the stroke that justice gave. (LSB 451:2)

There is no other God who loves and forgives like your God (Mi 7:18). He is the Suffering Servant King who died for you, that you might live eternally like a king with Him. (TLSB p. 1178)

12:42 *many even of the authorities believed on him* – Though they remained secret believers for fear of excommunication (see note on 9:22). (CSB)

E.g., Nicodemus (3:1-21) and Joseph of Arimathea (19:38). (TLSB)

fear of the Pharisees – Pharisees controlled Jewish synagogues. Few dared to oppose them, for fear of being ostracized. (TLSB)

They hid their real views for fear of being put out of the synagogue. They could not face the humiliation of that, valuing their reputation among the people more than their need to give glory to God. They still loved glory that comes from men more than the glory that comes from God in Christ. We should not be surprised at this cowardice in faith. Our own lives display it today. How often do we Christians fail to confess our faith because we fear the reaction of those around us? (PBC)

12:36b–43 Some Jews reject Jesus and, under God's judgment, are hardened in unbelief; others believe in Him but refuse to confess Him openly for fear of being removed from the synagogue community. The desire to be accepted by others can stand in the way of a Christian's bold confession of Christ today. Yet, take heart. God has revealed His saving presence (His glory) in the person of His Son, that we may

glorify Him before all people. • Lord, may I “tell of [Your] salvation from day to day” (Ps 96:2). Amen.
(TLSB)