

Sermon to the Saints of God assembled at Topeka, KS: Sunday, September 26, 2021

Jesus Did Not Cry nor Lift Up Voice in the Street

Isaiah 42:1-4 *“1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. 2 He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. 3 A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. 4 He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.”*

Throughout my life I have had this passage thrown in my face as an accusation that we are not following Christ, because we lift up voice in the street. It is insincerely used as support for the satanic lie that Jesus presented himself as a mealy-mouth approver of sin, a milquetoast preacher that begged and pleaded with people to follow after him, while he stood powerless against their free will; he was so “meek” that he didn’t deign to raise his voice in the street. This lie is so pervasive at this point that it is nearly universal in the earth; whether dealing with a mocking atheist, or a phony “Christian”, they present Jesus as an impotent slave to the whims of men, or worse, an ardent supporter of sin. Of course that is not the Lord Jesus Christ that we serve; that is not the Son of God who will shortly establish His Kingdom in this earth with power and glory; that is not the Christ of the Bible. Today, we will consider this prophecy that the Holy Spirit delivered through the mouth of our dear friend Isaiah. In particular, we will seek to answer the following questions:

- Who is this “servant” that God sent?
- What does it mean that he didn’t “cry” or “lift up voice” in the streets?
- What is the significance of the bruised reed and smoking flax?

The Holy Spirit provides us with the key to understanding this prophecy, in the life and work of Jesus Christ, as recorded in Matthew 12, where we see this prophecy fulfilled. Verses 17-21 directly reference this prophecy, but we will start at the beginning of the chapter in order to get some context.

Matthew 12:1-21 *“1 At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. 2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. 3 But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; 4 How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? 5 Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days*

the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? 6 But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. 7 But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. 8 For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day. 9 And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue: 10 And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him. 11 And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? 12 How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days. 13 Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other. 14 Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. 15 But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all; 16 And charged them that they should not make him known: 17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, 18 Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. 19 He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. 20 A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. 21 And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.”

Some brief thoughts on the interactions that Christ had with the Pharisees:

- **Matthew Henry:** *“The Jewish teachers had corrupted many of the commandments, by interpreting them more loosely than they were intended; a mistake which Christ discovered and rectified (Matthew 5) in his sermon on the mount: but concerning the fourth commandment, they had erred in the other extreme, and interpreted it too strictly. Note, it is common for men of corrupt minds, by their zeal in rituals, and the external services of religion, to think to atone for the looseness of their morals. But they are cursed who add to, as well as they who take from, the words of this book (Revelation 22:16,19; Proverbs 30:6).”*
- **Henry:** *“God will have mercy and not sacrifice, #Mt 12:7. Ceremonial duties must give way to moral, and the natural, royal law of love and self-preservation must take place of ritual observances. This is quoted from #Ho 6:6. It was used before, at Matthew 9:13, in vindication of mercy to the souls of men; here, of mercy to their bodies. The rest of the sabbath was ordained for man’s good, in favour of the body, Deuteronomy 5:14. Now no law must be construed so as to contradict its own end. If you had known what this means, had known what it is to be of a merciful disposition, you would have been sorry that they were forced to do this to satisfy their hunger, and would not have condemned the guiltless. Note, First, Ignorance is the cause of our rash and uncharitable censures of our brethren. Secondly, It is not enough for us to know the scriptures, but we must labour to know the meaning of them. Let him*

that readeth understand. Thirdly, Ignorance of the meaning of the scripture is especially shameful in those who take upon them to teach others.”

- The caviling of the Pharisees did not keep Christ from public worship. Following that example, we ought never to excuse ourselves from the assembly – the communion of the saints of God – because of a personal offense with another.
- Notice the judicial blindness that God gives to the reprobate heart. These people preemptively argued with Christ about performing a miraculous healing! They were dogging his tracks, knowing that he would perform miracles, just so that they could find fault with him! If you saw him perform that healing, wouldn't you think that the reaction would be joy to be in the presence of the power of God, and joy for the soul that had received such healing? Rituals and formalities should be the farthest thing from their mind, but for the fact that their entire religion rested not in the power of God, but in self-righteousness. Put another way – the form of their rituals was their entire religion. *“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.” (2Timothy 3:5)*

Now that we have established our context, let us proceed with the questions that we are considering:

Who is this “servant” that God sent?

Isaiah 42:1 *“Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.”*

Matthew 12:18 *“Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.”*

- The scriptures are more than clear that Jesus Christ is this servant that God the Father sent. This is Christ in the particular role as the mediator between God and men.
 - **Philippians 2:5-11** *“5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*
- We see here all three parts of the godhead at play – the Father, who has all power in Heaven and Earth, appointed his own Son to serve in this great work of salvation, accompanied by the Holy Spirit, whose work takes place in the hearts of

men, causing them to believe the Gospel of Christ. What blessed assurance! This is similar to the scene that played out on the banks of the Jordan River, when John baptized Christ: *“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* (**Matthew 3:16, 17**)

- What is the “judgment” that He is showing to the Gentiles? This word means “law”; this is the preaching of the whole law of God, including the Gospel of Christ the Messiah, not only to Jewry, but to every nation, kindred, people and tongue. Thank God for that mercy!
- **Richard Sibbes:** *“Christ was God’s servant in the greatest piece of service that ever was, a chosen and a choice servant who did and suffered all by commission from the Father. In this we may see the sweet love of God toward us, in that he counts the work of our salvation by Christ his greatest service, and in that he will put his only beloved Son to that service. In temptations it is safest to behold nothing but Christ, the true brazen serpent, the true “Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world”, (John 1:29). This saving object has a special influence of comfort to the soul, especially if we look not only on Christ, but upon the Father’s authority and love in him. For in all that Christ did and suffered as Mediator, we must see God in him reconciling the world to himself (2 Cor. 5:19).”*

What does it mean that he didn’t “cry” or “lift up voice” in the streets?

Isaiah 42:2 *“He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.”*

Matthew 12:19 *“He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.”*

- First, let us establish what this does NOT mean. As I said earlier, the world says that this means Jesus didn’t ever say a loud, hard, or remotely critical word. Phony Christians want to use this passage as a way to excuse their silence in the face of proud sin, as well as silence any who would speak against sin. It is a false humility - false meekness - which leads to teaching smooth, flattering, fatal lies. We don’t have to wrestle hard with this folly, because the scriptures clearly show that Jesus did indeed cry aloud, and lift up his voice when he preached the Gospel.
 - Jesus cried aloud when he delivered the parable of the four kinds of ground, teaching about the sovereignty of God, the ministry of the Gospel, election, reprobation, the perseverance of the saints, etc.: *“And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”* (**Luke 8:8**)
 - He cried aloud when teaching the nature of the godhead, and the work that He was appointed to: *“Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye*

both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not.” (John 7:28)

- He cried aloud in proclaiming Himself as the river of living water – the only way to salvation and eternal life: *“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.” (John 7:37)*
- He cried aloud when showing the nature of the resurrection to come by restoring Lazarus to life: *“And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.” (John 11:43)*
- Furthermore, this is the same Jesus who cried aloud in the temple at Jerusalem, *“And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables”. (John 2:15)*
- If this prophecy of Christ does not mean that he literally won’t lift up voice in the streets, then what does it mean? What is this cry that won’t be heard in the streets? I believe that the primary meaning can be found in the context of Isaiah 42.
 - **Isaiah 42:13-17** *“13 The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. 14 I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once. 15 I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools. 16 And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them. 17 They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye are our gods.”*
 - The first portion of Isaiah 42 (verses 1-5) speaks to the work of salvation that Christ came to perform in His first advent (2000 years ago). This portion (verses 13-17) speaks to the work of judgment that He will render when He returns to this earth and establishes His Kingdom. **Then** we will see the cry that He will utter as He sets about that wonderful and terrible work of judgment: the cry of a jealous man; the cry of war; the cry of a woman in travail. All of these are descriptive of the cry that is associated with a sudden, certain, and violent outcome. Though He has patiently waited, and withheld that cry, the time will come to cry in this fashion to bring forth vengeance for His holy name; to bring forth final and righteous judgment to the wicked; to bring forth the birth of a restored world, and a redeemed people. Consider the words of Christ on this point:

- **John 12:44-50** *“Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.”*
 - This is another passage that Satan loves to lie about, claiming that Christ doesn’t judge anyone, and neither should we. In this passage, Christ is teaching the beautiful truth that the Father postponed the work of executing full judgment against reprobate men, so that the work of salvation could first be performed. He withheld the battle cry – temporarily - knowing that the work of salvation would be defeated, if the work of judgment came first. God’s elect few must first be redeemed, before the work of full, final, righteous judgment could be performed. Once the work of salvation has been completed – once the last sheep is born, bruised, and brought to repent and believe on Christ – THEN the time of judgment will come. At that time, it will be Christ himself that is administering the judgment:
 - **Acts 17:30,31** *“30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”*
 - The wicked are already condemned, and carry that certain sentence with them through this life. That is the inconvenient truth of **John 3:18** *“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”* Christ has already judged the matter, and is simply awaiting the appropriate time to carry out the sentence that has been issued! The fairy tale, god-loves-everybody version of the “gospel” that wicked men use as a license to engage in sin without consequence, will evaporate, and the actual Gospel of Christ will crush them to powder in an instant! The Gospel requires the fruit of a heart that has been changed in faith, belief in Christ, and

repentance. That standard will be insurmountable for the heart that has rested upon the strength of flesh and self-defined “morals”. The mirage of a weak, sin-approving, hippy Jesus will vanish as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords arrives upon the scene leading the vanguard of the heavenly host, his vesture crimson from the slaughter as he treads down the wicked in righteous wrath.

- **Revelation 19:11-16** *“11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. 12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. 13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”*
- As a secondary application, I believe that there are practical lessons for us to learn from his literal behavior when He preached in the streets. To begin that analysis, consider that the word “cry” in Matthew 12:19, has the same root word found in this passage: *“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and **clamour**, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” (Ephesians 4:31,32)*
 - **Barnes:** *“All cherished, unreasonable anger. And clamour. Noise, disorder, high words; such as men use in a brawl, or when they are excited. Christians are to be calm and serious. Harsh contentions and strifes; hoarse brawls and tumults, are to be unknown among them.”*
 - **Clarke:** *“Loud and obstreperous speaking, brawling, railing, boisterous talk, often the offspring of wrath; all of which are highly unbecoming the meek, loving, quiet, sedate mind of Christ and his followers.”*
 - **Gill:** *“such as brawlings, contentions, contumelies, reproaches, slanders, etc. arising from an embittered, wrathful, and angry disposition.”*

- These expositions are of the word as used in Ephesians, which is in the context of the church. However, I think there is strong application to how we are to behave when we are engaged in preaching the Gospel in the streets. The example that Christ left us was one of clear, strong, applicable preaching, wherein sin was made exceeding sinful, and the fires of hell were made to be palpable to the hearer. However, he did not go to blows, or vindicate himself personally, for the sake of “winning” a forensic debate. When his clear preaching was rejected, he moved on to the next opportunity to preach. That’s what we saw him do with the Pharisees in Matthew 12 – they sought to kill him, but he had already quietly moved on to preach elsewhere. He was wise as a serpent; he didn’t get into a protracted war of words; he did the preaching and works of mercy that he was able to do, and then moved on to the next place. He wasn’t looking to reform the devil, and thus he left his apostles with this instruction: *“And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.”* (**Matthew 10:22,23**)
- Jesus Christ suffered the “contradiction of sinners” (**Hebrews 12:3**) – He was sinless, and yet He was terribly abused and crucified at the sinful and hypocritical hands of His own creation. Even so, we see that He never turned aside from preaching the Gospel, in order to vindicate His person, or engage in angry forensic debate. He stayed on message; He controlled His spirit. If He did that, then how much more so must we work hard to control our spirit when we engage in the work of the ministry? Our flesh is constantly rising up in us, such that our zeal for God and godliness, even righteous anger, can (and does) easily mingle with self-righteousness and personal anger / malice. That fact is why God told an oppressed, vexed, and distressed Jeremiah that he must bring forth (separate) the precious (word of God), from the vile (workings of the human heart), so that he could appropriately be the mouth of God in the earth. That is a work of prayerful self-examination which is required by every servant of God. It is a work that we will absolutely fail at from time to time, when faced with a demon possessed rabble that seeks our very lives. To be clear – loud words are not sinful; words of self-righteous malice are sinful; self-glorifying forensics for the sake of debate points are sinful.

What is the significance of the bruised reed and smoking flax?

Isaiah 42:3 *“A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.”*

Matthew 12:20 *“A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.”*

- I had originally intended to say a lot about the metaphor of a bruised reed and smoking flax, and how we can be instructed and comforted by them, but that subject grew too large to fit into this sermon, so I will just give a few thoughts for now, and may take this up as a separate sermon at a later date.
- What is a bruised reed? A reed is a tall, hollow plant that grows in marshy ground. There are various types of reeds, and they are used for quite a variety of practical things. This metaphor doesn't specify a type of reed, so I will default to the application specified elsewhere in the scriptures: “Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him.” (**2Kings 18:21**) Clearly in this case the reed is being used as a staff to lean upon. If a reed is bruised – like a bent drinking straw – then it is forever weakened, and it will fail as soon as pressure is applied. In short, a bruised reed cannot serve its purpose, and is therefore good for nothing.
- What is smoking flax? This Greek word is “linon”, from which we take our English word “linen”. This flax was used as the wick in an oil lamp; when it didn't work properly, the flax would not come to a full flame, but would begin to smoke. When that happened, the only thing to do was to quench it, because it was worthless. Not only was it giving no light, but it was obscuring vision with all of the noxious smoke. Again – it is the picture of worthlessness.
- These are both things that have no value – in fact they are dangerous! Similarly, the natural, wicked heart of every son and daughter of Adam is worthless because of sin, and is in fact a danger to all who interact with it. Everyone who remains in that condition – reprobate before God – is made to be taken and destroyed. (**2Peter 2:12**)
- The only thing that could redeem the worthless bruised reed and smoking flax, is the work of atonement and salvation that Jesus Christ came to perform when He walked on this earth, accompanied by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit in the heart of each of His precious little sheep. Herein lies the critical importance of the fact that Jesus Christ did not issue the cry of war and judgment when He walked the streets of this world. He had the power, and would have been justified to call ten thousand angels to relieve Him, and issue righteous judgment upon this wicked adamic race, but that would have destroyed every one of His little sheep in the process. Every bruised reed would have been broken, and all smoking flax would have been quenched. Such is the amazing love and mercy of God: *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass*

away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” (2Peter 3:9,10)

- Our hearts burn with zeal for our God, and long for the day that our conquering King would triumphantly ride through the gates of Jerusalem on that beautiful white horse. But let us remember with great humility the work that Christ first performed – the work of love, mercy, meekness, submission, patience and longsuffering – the work of our hope and joy: *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” (Zechariah 9:9)*