

The Servant Who Rules

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Advent: The Oldest Christmas Songs Series

Isaiah 42:1-4

One of the things that characterizes this season is how ubiquitous Christmas songs are. Don't you just love the word "ubiquitous"? I've always wanted to use that in a message, but I've never had an opportunity until now. It means "encountered everywhere." You pump gas at a gas station and they're piping in Christmas songs. I guess it is to encourage you to get a car wash with your fill up. I'm feeling so good; I'll buy some new wiper blades. In every drug store, clothes store, shopping mall, and grocery store they are all playing Christmas songs.

This is a good thing unless they pipe in, "I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas." Are you familiar with that one?

SLIDE

I want a hippopotamus for Christmas

Only a hippopotamus will do.

Don't want a doll, no dinky Tinker Toy

I want a hippopotamus to play with and enjoy.

I want a hippopotamus for Christmas

I don't think Santa Claus will mind, do you?

He won't have to use our dirty chimney flue

Just bring him through the front door,
That's the easy thing to do.
Mom says the hippo would eat me up, but then
My teacher says the hippo is a vegetarian.
There's lots of room for him in our two-car garage
I'd feed him there and wash him there
And give him his massage.
I can see me now on Christmas morning,
Creeping down the stairs
O what joy and what surprise
When I open up my eyes
To see a hippo hero standing there
I want a hippopotamus for Christmas
Only a hippopotamus will do.
No crocodiles, or rhinoceroses
I only like hippopotamuses
And hippopotamuses like me too.

That song will get you into the reason for the season! The one I really like is the
Chimney Song.

SLIDE

There's something stuck up in the chimney

And I don't know what it is,
But it's been there all night long.
While I waited up for Santa all Christmas night
But he never came and it doesn't seem right.
And there's something in the chimney
And it doesn't make a sound.
And I wish you Merry Christmas.

There's something stuck up in the chimney
And I don't know what it is,
But it's been there all week long.
Well, the dog keeps barking up the chimney flue
And we don't know what we're gonna do.
Cause there's something in the chimney
And it doesn't move around,
And it's been a week since Christmas.

There's something stuck up in the chimney
And I don't know what it is.
But it's been there all month long.
Well, it's jammed up tight above the fireplace
Now the house smells funny, such a big disgrace.
There's something in the chimney

And it doesn't talk at all,
And it's been there since last Christmas.
There's something stuck up in the chimney
And I don't know what it is,
But it's been there all year long.
I've been waiting up for Santa like I did last year
But my brother says, "He's already here."
And he's stuck up in the chimney
And he doesn't say a word.
And he'll be there every Christmas
And we'll have him every Christmas.

Isn't that cheerful? What do you think the oldest Christmas song is? We sing
"Hark the Herald Angels Sing," a great Christmas carol.

SLIDE

Hark, the herald angels sing,
Glory to the new born king.
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.
Joyful all ye nations rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With angelic hosts proclaim

Christ is born in Bethlehem.

Hark the herald angels sing

Glory to the new born king.

That Christmas carol goes back to 1739. It was written by Charles Wesley, who helped found the Methodist Church along with his brother, John.

Isaac Watts wrote a famous Christmas carol in 1719 called Joy to the World. That's really popular. But you can find Christmas songs being sung all the way back to the 4th century of the church. There is an old Advent song that goes back at least to the 5th century titled, "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence." It goes this way:

SLIDE

Let all mortal flesh keep silence,

And with fear and trembling stand;

Ponder nothing earthly minded,

For with blessing in his hand,

Christ our God to earth descendeth,

Our full homage to demand.

King of Kings, yet born of Mary

As of old on earth he stood,

Lord of Lords, in human vesture,

In the body and the blood,
He will give to all the faithful
His own self for heavenly food.

But you know, there are older Christmas songs than these. What is the oldest Christmas song? You might say: I know, I know. It's the song of the angels announcing the birth of Jesus to the shepherds in Luke 2:14.

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Lk 2:14 "Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

Maybe some of you would say: No! There's one older – Mary's Song, called The Magnificate, which reads in part:

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Lk 1:46 And Mary said:
"My soul glorifies the Lord
Lk 1:47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
Lk 1:48 for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
Lk 1:49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.
Lk 1:50 His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.

But over the next three weeks, as we celebrate Advent – Advent as you may not know, comes from a Latin word, adventus, which means the approach or the

arrival – during Advent we prepare for the approach, the arrival, the coming of Christ into the world. During the next three weeks, we're going to be looking at three of the oldest Christmas songs that are drawn from the book of Isaiah, the prophet. God inspired Isaiah seven centuries before he sent his Son to prepare the world for Jesus' arrival. One of the ways that the world was prepared for God the Son, the Messiah, is through song. God inspired Isaiah to write four songs.

The songs are found in Isaiah 42, 49, 50 and 52. They're sometimes called The Servant's Songs in Isaiah because Isaiah is identifying a person who is going to come and be called The Servant of the Lord, and he's calling people to get ready for him. Today, we're going to look at the first of Isaiah's songs found in Isaiah 42. It is a song I've titled "The Servant Who Rules." Let's pray.

SLIDE - Isaiah 42:1-4

Isa 42:1 "Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him
and he will bring justice to the nations.

Isa 42:2 He will not shout or cry out,
or raise his voice in the streets.

Isa 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;

Isa 42:4 he will not falter or be discouraged
till he establishes justice on earth.
In his law the islands will put their hope."

We read in v. 1 that the servant of the Lord is someone the Lord delights in.

SLIDE

Isa 42:1 “Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him
and he will bring justice to the nations.

Imagine a person that God is delighted in. Imagine a person who entirely pleases the Lord in everything he or she does. God sits back and thoroughly enjoys this person the way a grandpa might thoroughly enjoy his granddaughter or grandson, only to the n-th degree. Then consider the way you generally feel concerning God’s approach to you.

It is the rarest human being who believes that they may be a delight to God. We have an internal sense of being displeasing to God. I come away from conversations and think: Why did I say that. I think I made her feel bad. Why did I talk so much? Why wasn’t I more affirming? I should have let this person know how much I appreciate them. I didn’t listen well enough. I gave too much advice. They just wanted me to listen. Why didn’t we pray together. I thought too much about myself. I never should have told that joke at that person’s expense. Everybody laughed, but when I think back, I think I embarrassed him. What I just said was gossip, pure and simple.

Do you go back over your conversations the way I sometimes go back over mine and feel really bad about what you said because your words were discouraging or wounding, or gossip, or manipulative?

Or let me use another illustration. I often look at my finances and say: God, why do I spend so much money on myself and my own family? Why do I not give more money away? Why is it in my more honest moments I think I believe that my security rests in my possessions and in my investments, not in your provision? Why is it so hard for me to believe the apostle Paul's statement that if I just have food and clothing that should make me content?

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¹Ti 6:8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

Lord, I feel so ensnared as an American by money. Am I a greedy man? Do you view me as being greedy? The Word says you hate greed and that greed will keep someone out of the kingdom of God. Is that me?

I look at my prayers and how often I feel guilty because I don't pray enough. There is a world of need around me. But instead of inviting your intervention God, I push on into my day as if my work was more important than your work. God, you must hate my prayerlessness.

As you look at the various areas of your life, do you have an internal sense of being displeasing to God? Of being way less than delightful? Your speech, your approach to money, your prayer or prayerlessness, your sexual behavior, your

anger, your self-pity, your grudges – something that we do is not good enough to please a perfect God.

But even more profoundly, I think that everyone has a sense that there is not only something wrong with what we do, but there is something wrong with who we are. Even if I do absolutely nothing wrong, there is still this lingering sense of shame in me regarding who I am. The sense often is not only that I do wrong, but that I am wrong. I see myself often simply oriented toward myself. I am not thoroughly Christ-centered or others-center. I'm fundamentally self-centered.

Do you see that in yourself, friends? That you bend things toward yourself? Do you see that you and I often inflate our own sense of importance and we underestimate other people's contribution to our success? Are you aware of excusing your own gross sins, but then writing people off for things that are much smaller than what you've done? Can you look at your life and say: There are lots of times when I am fundamentally lazy when dealing with my own sins and my own flesh. But I am ruthless when dealing with the mistakes and weaknesses of others.

Do you see that in you? I sure see it in me. And my experience of being wrong – not just doing wrong – my experience of shame causes me to want to cover up. And this is what happens to all of us. We want to cover up. We want to hide. We create false selves and masks through which we relate to the world.

So. We come back to the question: What is it going to take for you and me to please God? What's it going to take for God to look at my life or your life and say about us what he says about the Servant of the Lord.

SLIDE

Isa 42:1 "Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him
and he will bring justice to the nations.

Is it possible that we could ever go to God without a mask, as we truly are, with our real feelings and our real mistakes and all of our stuff and still be delightful to God?

Look at all the religions in the world and you will see that everyone, everywhere has the sense of being displeasing to God and way less than delightful. We have to offer this sacrifice, this animal to God. Some cultures have even sacrificed their children in an effort to placate the gods who must be angry because we are so displeasing. Some cultures and some religions offer the gods food. I've been to India on a number of occasions and I've watched people offer milk in a pan to rat gods. They take milk and pour it in a little pan. They take other food and spread it by a snake hole to satisfy the snake gods. I've watched Hindu priests offer incantations around people's cars, burning incense and other various rituals

to bring a blessing to the person as they go on a trip so that the gods won't be displeased. Buddhists will spin a Tao wheel.

We try to hard to be pleasing to God. Perhaps if I go to Mass every week. If I'm Jewish, perhaps if I don't drive on the Sabbath or carry money, or light a fire, then God will be pleased with me. We try so hard to be pleasing to God, but nothing seems to work very long. We have a temporary sense of being OK, but then we fall back into a greater sense of shame and guilt.

What does God delight in? Even better, who does God delight in? Here is what we read in Isaiah 42:1,

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Isa 42:1 "Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him
and he will bring justice to the nations.

Who is the delightful servant? Who is the chosen of God, the elect of God? The New Testament identifies this chosen of God as Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah, in Matthew 12:15,

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Mt 12:15 Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. Many followed him, and he healed all their sick,
Mt 12:16 warning them not to tell who he was.
Mt 12:17 This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:
Mt 12:18 "Here is my servant whom I have chosen,

the one I love, in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will proclaim justice to the nations.

God himself speaks from heaven at the baptism of Jesus of Nazareth. This is what he says in Matthew 3:16-17,

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Mt 3:16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him.

Mt 3:17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

God loves his Son. He is completely, entirely pleased by his Son. The Father spoke again at the transfiguration of Jesus. He's up on the mountain and veil of his flesh was pulled back for a moment and his disciples saw him as he is, the Divine One sent by God. On that Holy Mountain of Transfiguration, God the Father spoke and he said in Matthew 17:5,

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Mt 17:5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

Jesus said about himself in Jn. 8:29,

SLIDE

Jn 8:29 The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him."

What is the secret of you being pleasing to God? What is the secret to me being pleasing to God? What's the secret of us being delightful to God?

The secret is this: As we are connected to Jesus; as we're found in Jesus; hidden in Jesus; enveloped by Jesus; as we look to Jesus by faith; as we embrace Jesus; as you trust Jesus; cling to Jesus; yield to Jesus; get filled with Jesus; welcome Jesus; as you are rooted in Jesus; attached to Jesus; in Jesus; with Jesus; under Jesus; doing things for Jesus; by the power of Jesus; unto Jesus you are pleasing to God! Jesus always delights God the Father because he always does what pleases God. On my own, on your own, nothing you do – no self-improvement program, no amount of prayers, no vows you make, no commitment to religion, no resolution to clean up your life this time will ever please God. You will never be holy enough. You will never be fixed up enough. You will never be clean enough to be pleasing to God.

If you try to go to God on your own, your own internal sense of shame will always cause you to cover up and play at religion. If you try to go to God without Jesus, you will approach God the way you approach everybody else in this world – inauthentically, wearing a mask, playing a role, and fearing the full exposure of yourself. But if you go to God in Jesus, if you wrap yourself up with Jesus, if you allow Jesus to capture you and captivate you, you will be free before God to be truthful, free to be authentic, because you will know that you are pleasing to God, delightful to God because you are in his Son.

Do you get it? Jesus pleases God! Jesus satisfies God. Jesus is the delightful one, the well-pleasing one, the chosen one, the elect of God. Do you get it? You don't have to keep wondering what God thinks of you. If I am in Jesus, and you are in Jesus, then we become the delightful ones. We become the well-pleasing ones. We become the chosen ones. We become the elect ones.

But how do we know that we're attached to Jesus, connected to Jesus, wrapped up in Jesus? How do we know? How do we know that we're not simply playing games with ourselves and God?

It all comes back to this issue of delight. God's delight, as we've found, is in the servant of the Lord, his Son Jesus. And if God's Spirit is in you, then you are going to delight in the same things that God delights in and you will actually hate and you will have an aversion to and a distaste for the things that God hates, the things he has an aversion toward.

Read through the book of Psalms and you will see the author taking delight in various things showing that he is, in fact, one of God's people. For example, the author begins the entire book of Psalms with this summary statement of the book.

SLIDE

Ps 1:1 Blessed is the man

who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
or stand in the way of sinners
or sit in the seat of mockers.

Ps 1:2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.

The person who is really attached to God is someone who is delighted in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night. Let's apply this to ourselves. Do you delight in learning God's Word, in reading it, in thinking about it, in hearing it taught? Is it your delight to apply the scripture to your life? Or, instead does the Bible mean almost nothing to you. Does the thought of actually picking up the Bible in your free time and reading it like the thought of eating shredded wheat without the milk, or eating sawdust?

If you are honest with yourself, you might say that the real formative influences in your life have nothing to do with the scripture. It has to do with the opinion of others – your friends, your peers, or your coworkers.

How about this concerning delight. Psalm 16:2-3,

SLIDE

Ps 16:2 I said to the LORD, "You are my Lord;
apart from you I have no good thing."

Ps 16:3 As for the saints who are in the land,
they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight.

Is your delight in God? Do you say to yourself, "Apart from the Lord, I have absolutely nothing, I am nothing. Apart from the Lord, nothing in my life works." Do you often find yourself saying that what really thrills me, what I enjoy, what I am delighted in is being around God's people. More than anything else in life, I am drawn to Christian fellowship. Would it be true about you to say that you love connecting to real Christians?

I do. I love being around real Christians. I find genuine Christians incredibly attractive. I'm not particularly drawn to religious people at all. In fact, really religious weird me out. And I say that with affection, but being around people who are judgmental, who judge every church. If the truth be known, those folks don't really like lost people. I just don't really like being around religious people. But I love being around people who love lost people. I love seeing humility in someone else's life. I love when someone has a big heart for the church. They don't just love their part of the church, but really love the whole church. I love that kind of person. I love hearing stories about people who put themselves out, people who gave away a whole bunch of money to someone who is in need, people who volunteer in a homeless ministry, who go to homeless camps in the middle of winter to hand out blankets. I love when I meet people who have room in their lives for imperfect people, odd people, and weird people.

Like me, you may have struggles with religious people. You may really be bothered by cynical people, people who are always scolding you, or others about

why you aren't good enough, your doctrine is not sound enough, or you don't believe the 1271 things that they require you to believe in order to pass their litmus paper test of orthodoxy.

So, as you look at yourself, as you consider what you delight in, you can tell whether you are attached to the Servant of the Lord. And do not say: Well, I must not be attached; I must not be delightful to God because I feel torn, because I feel divided. Maybe you are like me. Maybe you feel torn often because there is a large part of me that loves the Bible. There is a large part of me that wants way more of God's Word in my life than I presently have.

But then I get lazy and neglectful and put off Bible reading. I see other desires in me. Do not say: Well, I must not be delightful to God because I don't always love being with other genuine Christians. Perhaps part of me totally identifies with what you said, Rich. I really am attracted to the real deal. I love genuine Christians who aren't dripping with religion. But the truth is sometimes I just want to sit in front of my TV and veg out. Sometimes there's nothing I want to do more than watch some stupid, totally inane comedy, or some thriller movie that leaves about 15 people dead in the woods. Or do you say: Sometimes all I want to do is go shopping and acquire more useful stuff.

Real deal Christians often feel torn in their delights. Listen to the apostle Paul's testimony about himself. Romans 7:22-23,

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Ro 7:22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law;

Ro 7:23 but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

I want you to hear this with all affection. But I've discovered that many Christians live with a great amount of self-condemnation because they say: Unless I can look inside and see 100% whole-hearted delight in God all of the time, and 100% whole-hearted delight in God's Word and God's people all of the time, how could God possibly delight in me? I see myself torn. Many Christians conclude: I've probably not embraced Christ. I'm probably not in Christ. I'm probably not wrapped up with Christ; enveloped by him; connected to him.

Friend, here's the good news. If you have Jesus to any degree, you belong to God! If Christ lives in you to any degree, if you are attached to him at all, you are a delight to God. You may describe yourself in the words of Isaiah 42:3,

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Isa 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;

You may be a bruised reed or a smoldering wick. Of course, you don't want to simply smolder forever. At some point in your life, you ought to desire to burn white hot. At some point you want to pray that the flame inside of you would burn

and consume your whole heart. But a smoldering wick is still burning. God's fire is still in you. And the Lord recognizes that fire in you even when it is dim and smoldering. You belong to him.

Friend, God may not approve of everything in your life or my life. But he loves me and he loves you 100% of the time. There is a difference between approving of what we do and loving and accepting us. God's love and acceptance of you – if you are his, if you are attached to the Servant of the Lord, it never changes. He may not approve of your behavior or my behavior. But the good news is that he always delights in you.

On the other hand, if you say: You know, when I hear you talking I don't feel like a large part of me delight is in God's Word. I, frankly, don't think about the bible at all. I could go weeks and months without even thinking about reading the Bible. It is just not part of my life. I virtually never feel drawn to read. I don't thrill in listening to the Bible being taught. And, honestly, I don't feel like a large part of me feels like being with genuine non-religious Christians. I may be happy that such people exist and I'm glad people are doing good in the world, but connecting with and fellowshiping with real Christians is pretty irrelevant to me.

If you are like that, if you are honest with yourself and you look inside and say: Really, Rich, I'm not torn. I simply have other interests and passions, other delights. My real delight, what really captures me is my job, or my family, or

playing golf, or decorating my house. I'm not particularly thrilled about God, or thrilled about what God says in the Bible.

If that's your case, then it is very probable, friend, that you have not embraced Christ. It is probable that you are not in him, that you don't belong to Christ, that you are separated from Christ. And God's strongest desire for you, what God really wants for you, is for you to get connected up with his Son and come under his rule.

Now, what does the Servant come to do? Vv. 1, 3 and 4.

SLIDE

Isa 42:1 "Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him
and he will bring justice to the nations.

Isa 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;

Isa 42:4 he will not falter or be discouraged
till he establishes justice on earth.
In his law the islands will put their hope."

We read that the servant came to bring justice to the nations. V. 1,

SLIDE

Isa 42:1 "Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him

and he will bring justice to the nations.

V. 3,

SLIDE

Isa 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;

V. 4,

SLIDE

Isa 42:4 he will not falter or be discouraged
till he establishes justice on earth.
In his law the islands will put their hope."

Now, justice is translated from the Hebrew word "mispat." And you need to understand that justice in the Hebrew bible was much more than right judgment in a court of law. Justice for the Jews was much more than a judicial finding for the right person, assessing the proper damages, vindicating an offended person, punishing the offender. Justice in the Old Testament, justice to the Jews meant bringing life back to the order that God originally intended in creation. Justice in the Old Testament meant life functioning according to God's intended design.

The task of the Servant of the Lord, the task of Messiah, was to get people's lives, and to get all of society functioning according to God's design for people, and according to God's design for relationships in society. Justice in the Old Testament was the fulfillment of your destiny, your purpose in life, your design, what God had in mind for you when he made you.

Friend, do you ever allow your mind to imagine that God had a purpose when he thought of you and created you? Do you believe that God has an intended destiny for your life and that your life only works when you fulfill that destiny? What if we didn't have to create our own meaning in life? What if we didn't all just have to search around for a purpose? What if God had a purpose and life was all about discovering that purpose? What if God intends to do you good? What if nothing you could ever create for yourself would come anywhere close to what God's intention was for you?

To live apart from the design of God, and the intended purpose of God is to live a life of disorder. You know what disorder is. Disorder is the back of many of your cars. Disorder is the bottom of your closet. Disorder is the top of your desk. Disorder is your checkbook. You look in your checkbook and it is never balanced, or what you call balancing your checkbook is \pm \$500. You haven't a clue whether your credit card statement is accurate or not. You have way too many bills, way too much debt. Your paper in your filing system looks like a tornado hit it.

Disorder may be internal. Inside you are just an absolute boiling pot of conflicting emotions. You are overwhelmed with anxiety about your future, your health, your kids, and your job. Maybe you are sitting on a powder keg of rage. You are just so angry at the way life is turning out for you, or the way life is turning out for someone you love. Maybe there is disorder in your relationships, this family mess. There is all kinds of dysfunction and tension in your extended family or one or more of your kids is doing poorly, or your marriage situation is bad, or your roommate situation is horrible.

When we try to create order for ourselves, it never works. We can never achieve God's intended design on our own. We just make things worse. It is only when we let the Servant of the Lord reign over us that our lives line up, our emotions line up. We can get our finances in order. Our relationships start getting in order.

But you may be afraid of yielding control to the servant of the Lord. You may be afraid of really yielding control of an out of order area of your life. You may say: If I really whole-heartedly tried to embrace God's design for my sexuality, for my money, for my marriage, then I'm going to be crushed. My dreams will be crushed.

I believe that Isaiah 42:2-3 are hugely important for anyone afraid of really bringing their lives, or an area of their life, under the control of Christ. I believe

that anyone who says: I'm afraid of saying, "Do whatever you need to do with me, Lord," that person needs to understand Isaiah 42:2-3,

SLIDE

Isa 42:2 He will not shout or cry out,
or raise his voice in the streets.

Isa 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;

You see, what Isaiah is telling us in this oldest of Christmas songs is that the Lord is unlike every other ruler. He is unlike any other master. He is unlike anyone you have ever met or any kind of leadership or rule you have ever experienced. The rule of the Servant of the Lord is completely non-oppressive. Unlike any other rule, the rule of the Servant of the Lord actually liberates you and frees you to move into your destiny.

You know, for many of us, our experience of people being in control is one of wounding and oppression. Some of you might say that your parents called the shots and they dominated you. They never allowed you to be you. It was their way or the highway. Maybe you would say: My ex-husband called the shots. He was abusive. He was controlling financially and emotionally. Or your boss calls the shots and he ripped you off.

So we react to our experience of oppression and control by becoming self-protective. We say: No one is going to control me anymore. I'm not going to

surrender to anyone or anything. I'm just going to be completely independent and call my own shots.

I've seen people in a completely self-protective way enter marriages and start off with all kinds of prenuptial agreements, and separate checking accounts.

Following a divorce, they make resolutions. You aren't going to take guff from anyone. Or maybe you won't work for anyone anymore. I talk with so many folks who run their heads into the wall trying to get some small business off the ground. I say: Why don't you just take a job somewhere? The answer is: I just can't work for anyone else. I have to be my own boss.

We've experienced control and rule in such a bad way that we're afraid of surrendering to the Servant of the Lord because we are afraid that he is going to be like all the other rulers and crush us too. I've talked with people who, in all sincerity, said that they were desperately afraid of becoming a true disciple of Jesus because they knew if they really became one of Jesus' followers, they would be punished, or they'd be forced to be a missionary in some miserable part of the world. They think that Jesus wants to crush their dreams of getting married, or their dream of having children, or their dream of being successful in business.

If I really say: Jesus, I'm going to turn my dating life over to you. I'm a single person. I'm going to just turn this whole out of control, disordered area of my life,

my relationship with the opposite sex, then I know that Jesus is going to make me be alone for the rest of my life, or he will make me marry someone I'm not attracted to at all. But it will be good for me and it will make me holy.

Maybe you've been wounded in your view of the Servant of the Lord by some oppressive parochial school teacher, or Sunday School teacher, or pastor, or parent who presented to you a Jesus who was vindictive, a Jesus who produced shame, a Jesus who was only interested in making you behaviorally conform. Again, I say this with affection, but friends, I'm convinced that most Christians have a guilt-centered relationship with Jesus, not a love-centered relationship. You know what is right to do. You know it is right to submit to the Servant of the Lord. And you feel guilty when you don't. But you don't delight in yielding to him. You yield because the needle on your guilt meter is way over in the red zone. You yield to the Lord because you are convinced that you are yielding to the person who loves you more than anyone in the universe loves you. You don't surrender to the Lord as a person would surrender to an extraordinary lover.

Who do you think Jesus is really? Who do you think this Servant of the Lord is really? Do you think Jesus is just another abusive leader? One more controlling person who wants to break you down? Do you think about Jesus as just being one more manipulator? One more person who really doesn't understand you? Doesn't get you? And who is going to leave you confused, powerless, and dominated?

Jesus doesn't beat you up until you give up. On the contrary, Jesus took the punishment for our sins upon himself at the cross so that he could give us life.

Look at the Servant's method of leading. V. 3,

SLIDE

Isa 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;

This verse is talking to all of us. Some people may imagine themselves to be oak trees, but we are all bruised reeds. Some people may imagine themselves to be bonfires, but we are all smoldering wicks. And so the Servant of the Lord approaches all of us with amazing gentleness and grace. His heart is for you. Consider the tenderness of Christ in the gospels. Watch the way Jesus related to bruised reeds and smoldering wicks – to a widow who just lost her son, he reached out in gentleness and implored her to not cry. He gave her back her son. To a woman caught in adultery, who was covering herself in shame, Jesus gave her back her dignity.

Jesus wants to deal gently with us and establish a grace-filled rule over us. So he says in Matthew 11:28-29,

SLIDE

Mt 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Mt 11:29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Jesus comes to us and instead of crushing us, he kneels and washes our feet. Jesus comes to us and instead of strangling us, he opens up his hands and invites us to put in his hands everything we're doing that sabotages our lives and destroys our happiness.

Because we're coming to a ruler who doesn't oppress us, we don't have to cover up our bruises, or hide the fact that we're not burning very hot. We can be honest. We can totally surrender to the rule of the Servant. And in surrendering to his rule, we discover that in Jesus Christ, we become the chosen ones of God. In Jesus Christ, we become the elect ones of God. In Jesus Christ, we become the delightful one to God. Let's pray.

The Servant Who Rules

Rich Nathan

December 4-5, 2004

Advent: The Oldest Christmas Songs Series

Isaiah 42:1-4

- I. Singing To God
- II. Delightful To God (Is. 42:1)
 - A. Our Condition
 - 1. Guilt
 - 2. Shame
 - B. God's Delight (Mt. 3:16, 17; 17:5; Jn. 8:29)
 - C. Our Delight (Ps. 1:1, 2; 16:2, 3)
 - 1. Divided (Rom. 7:22, 23)
 - 2. Accepted
- III. Submitted To God
 - A. Apart From The Servant's Rule: Disorder (Is. 42:1, 3, 4)
 - B. Approaching The Servant's Rule: Fear
 - C. Accepting The Father's Rule: Freedom
 - 1. Gentle (Is. 42:3; 61:1; Mt. 11:28, 29; Heb. 2:18)
 - 2. Hidden (Is. 42:2)