

BEHOLD THE SERVANT!

Week 1–December 2-8

Scripture Reading:

Old Testament: Isaiah 42:1-9

New Testament: Matthew 20:26-28

Reflections:

Throughout history, the belief was held among the Jews that the Messiah would come as a warrior; someone who would bring justice and peace to their nation. They anticipated that their foes would be vanquished and they would no longer be held captive by any other ruler!

But Jesus came as a tiny infant, born in a humble stable, to hard working parents in the deadbeat town of Nazareth. So certainly, no one would ever believe that this Jesus, this carpenter's son, could ever triumph over the Roman Empire and establish a new kingdom on earth!

The intention of God was completely different. Jesus came to serve, not to destroy. He did not come to raise his voice, but to be raised from the dead. He did not come to break reeds and snuff out candles, but to heal the broken and be the Light of the World. He came to take hold of our hands, open the eyes of the blind and to set the captives free. This is how he serves us. This is why he came, to keep us and to make a new way for us. This is what Christmas is...to bring us back and to redeem us to himself.

Questions to discuss:

- What are some of the ways that you have seen Jesus serving you in your life?
- How can you serve your family and friends this holiday season?

Prayer:

Thank you Heavenly Father for sending Jesus to us, not to condemn and destroy us for our sinfulness, but to bring light into our lives and to ultimately die on the cross. Thank you for your example to us. May we continue to seek out ways where we can serve our family and neighbors and give you the glory. Amen



Week 2–December 9-15

Scripture Reading:

Old Testament: Isaiah 49:6

New Testament: Acts 2:17-21

Reflections:

When Jesus, God's promised Servant, came into the world, what was he here to do?

Isaiah tells us that it was Jesus' mission not only to save the Israelites, but to make Israel a guiding light to all the nations of the earth. From God's perspective, it would be too "light" or "small" a thing for Jesus to merely save Israel (Isa. 49:6). From the beginning, God promised that through Abraham's children "all the nations of the earth will be blessed" (Gen. 22:18) and in the book of Acts, Luke records crowds of diverse peoples from "every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5) gathering in Jerusalem and encountering God! While it is true that we live in a dark world, we dare not forget that Jesus, the light of the world, came so that the Church could shine God's light by loving others and leading *all* peoples to Him.

Questions to discuss:

- If the Church is called to represent a God who loves the whole world, why do churches tend to be segregated by ethnicity, culture, and economic status?
- What can we do as a Church to welcome and bless those who are different than the majority culture?

Prayer:

Holy God, thank you for sending your Servant Jesus to make a way for all the nations to come to you. We are so grateful that even though we were once foreigners, cut off from your promise, you have included us in your family. Help us to have your heart for others and to pursue those different from us so that the whole world can see your love and the Church can become the beautiful mosaic that you have called it to be. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Week 3–December 16-22

Scripture Reading:

Old Testament: Isaiah 50:4-11

New Testament: Mark 1:35

Reflections:

This passage in Isaiah explores two main aspects of Jesus' life: his obedience to the Father and his rejection by man. Even though the perfect goodness of God was fully on display in Jesus, he was despised, rejected, and eventually sentenced to death as a result of his obedience. How did Jesus live obediently in the face of such violent opposition? He did so through his complete dependence upon and connection with the Father. "Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught."

In Mark's gospel we see a very brief, simple, and yet clear picture of what connection to the Father looked like for Jesus in everyday life. If we desire to live lives of obedience, then our obedience must also be fueled by connection with the Father. We too face great opposition to our obedience, the greatest of which resides within us – our sinful desire to be ruled by no one other than ourselves. How might we live obediently in the face of such powerful opposition? We cannot, of our own ability. We rely upon the one who suffered not because he was guilty, but because we are guilty. We trust in his obedience, and we allow him to shape his obedience into our own.

Questions to discuss:

- What does connection with the Father look like for you?
- How would you like for it to look? How will you get there?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for the obedience of your servant, Jesus Christ. Give us ears to hear as those who are taught, that we may glorify you and bless others through our obedience. Amen.



Week 4–December 23-29

Scripture Reading:

Old Testament: Isaiah 53:4-6

New Testament: 1 Peter 2:24-25

Reflections:

God created man and woman in His image, to live in intimate relationship within the continual loving presence of God. We were created for love, out of love. But, beginning with Adam and Eve, we chose to trust in ourselves and stray from the loving presence of God. Our disobedience, our sin, is the desire to follow our own plans, follow our dreams and be “true to ourselves.” Sin isolates us from each other and separates us from our Holy creator. Just like sheep, we wander and become lost. We become lost in our loneliness, isolation, selfishness, guilt, pride and cannot find our way back to God on our own.

These beautiful passages proclaim that the suffering of Jesus has rescued us and saved us. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to dwell among us. He willingly became the suffering servant on our behalf. Christ, who lived a sinless life, went to the cross and bore our sins of disobedience so that we could be reconciled back into a loving relationship with God. Jesus came to earth to do for us what we could not do for ourselves, rescue us and return us back to the Shepherd. Christ proclaimed we will find true peace and rest for our souls if we place our lives in his hands, trusting him completely, and giving our lives over to him. Through faith in Christ, and his work on the cross, we have a new life and a new identity as an heir to God’s Kingdom. By His wounds we are healed!

Questions to discuss:

- Discuss some ways in which you rejoice in what Christ has done for you.
- How might you show this joyful gratitude to others?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, You are the faithful and sovereign creator. Your righteousness and holiness warrant our undivided trust. Forgive me when I forget, when I wander and drift from your loving presence. Help me to embrace the Good News and to rejoice for what has been done for me by Jesus on the cross. May the Holy Spirit empower us to share this joy, love, and gratitude with others this holiday season. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen.