

Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the LORD called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name. ² He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver. ³ He said to me, “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor.” ⁴ But I said, “I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing. Yet what is due me is in the LORD’s hand, and my reward is with my God.”

⁵ And now the LORD says— he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD and my God has been my strength— ⁶ he says: “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.” ⁷ This is what the LORD says— the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel—to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers: “Kings will see you and rise up, princes will see and bow down, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.” (NIV84)

Theme: The hidden glory of Jesus.

1. Made and formed by God.
2. Rejected and praised by others.

Like many people you may have a favorite tool. You like it because it is reliable and always gets the job done. It would be different if it didn’t work that well. If it was made out of cheap materials or shoddy engineering it wouldn’t be your favorite tool. But one of the reasons you like it and use it so much is because it was expertly crafted. And so you take care of it—you may even keep it in some sort of case. But no matter how much you love your favorite tool; there are going to be some who don’t like it and reject it as a piece of junk.

The same can be said of Jesus. He was expertly crafted by God—precisely engineered for a specific purpose. But as we’ll see today, the glory of Jesus was hidden. Although he was made and formed by God, he was rejected by some and praised by others.

By the time our text for today was written, the people of Israel had rebelled against God. They bowed down and worshiped other gods. They refused to listen to God or obey his Word. They failed to heed warning after warning. In the 46 chapters before our text Isaiah already warned the people that their country would be destroyed. They would be taken into exile to Babylon. Because of their sin and unbelief, the temple would be burned to the ground. But Isaiah also had words of promise and restoration. They wouldn’t stay in captivity forever. God would raise up a man by the name of Cyrus. And through him, God would bring his people back to the Promised Land. They would have their wealth restored and they would live once again in Jerusalem.

But the Jews still had a problem. They might be restored physically. But they needed to be restored spiritually. And that was a much bigger issue. A man by the name of Cyrus could restore their physical lives. But no mere man could restore them spiritually. No man could forgive their sins. No man could lead them back to the one true faith and obedience to the one true God. No man could restore their relationship with God.

Doesn’t the same stand for us? From the beginning we were God’s enemies. We didn’t know him or his Son. And we still sin against him to this day. We rebel against him time and time again. Because of who we are and what we do, we are hopeless. We have alienated ourselves from God. And there is no hope in us to restore ourselves. We can’t bring ourselves into a right relationship with God. It is impossible for us, just as it was for the Israelites, to restore the relationship we once enjoyed with God.

But God had a plan. It involved his servant. Our text for today is the 2nd of what we call Isaiah’s four “Servant Songs.” In these prophecies we see that God’s servant is his son. And this servant would suffer much for us. But in the end he would be exalted. Here we see that the Lord called and chose Jesus from before the beginning of the world. He was the Messiah—the anointed one who would save the people from their sins. God made and formed him just the way he wanted him—like the engineer of your favorite tool; or the makers of that perfect weapon of war, Jesus was expertly crafted. Of course Jesus’ weapon wasn’t an ordinary weapon, but the gospel that he spoken. As

he says in verse 2, **He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver.**

Jesus was formed exactly how he was supposed to be. True God—and yet to man. The Lord said to Jesus in verse 3, **You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor.** But this splendor would remain hidden. This sharpened sword remained hidden in the hand of the Lord. This polished arrow was concealed in his quiver. The glory of God was hidden until the time to use it was just right. We see that in Jesus. If it wasn't for the angels and a star no one would have been able to tell that the baby born in Bethlehem was the Son of God. When looking at Jesus, the people simply saw a man. He had flesh and blood just like the rest of us. He got tired, hungry, and sick. He was like one of us in every way. Jesus' divine glory was hidden in his own flesh and blood. He had not beauty or majesty to attract us to him. He certainly didn't look like God. Especially in his suffering and death. As he hung there on the cross, beaten and bruised, very few people believed that he truly was the Son of God. His glory remained hidden.

And at that time, so did his work. Many people probably thought it was all for nothing. A waste. All he did was in vain. Jesus himself would have the same thought. **But I said, "I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing.** Jesus was popular for awhile. For about the first two years of his ministry people followed him wherever he went. They saw him as a miracle worker—a healer of diseases, one who had power over nature. They wanted him to be their bread king—to provide free food and nourishment for them so they wouldn't have to work. But soon they rejected Jesus. His teachings were hard to understand. They saw him as a great prophet, or a fantastic teacher. But they didn't see him as the Messiah. They simply couldn't accept the fact that he is the Son of God. By the time Jesus hung on the cross, most people had abandoned him. Even his disciples ran away when he was arrested. Peter, who was one of the disciples who was closest to Jesus, even denied that he knew Jesus. So it seemed as if his work was in vain. He had very few followers in the end. He was denied by his own country men—forgotten by the very ones he was sent to save.

And he was beaten, mocked, and ridiculed and hung on a tree like a common criminal. Yes, it seemed as if his work was all in vain.

And yet it wasn't all in vain. While some people rejected Jesus, others—like you and me have seen Jesus's glory and praise him.

For centuries the Israelites waited for the Promised Messiah. But when he finally came, many rejected him. Especially those in places of leadership. The chief priests, the members of the Sanhedrin, the Pharisees, and many more—they all rejected Jesus. They didn't see his divine glory. So they rejected him. They arrested him. And convinced Pilate to have him crucified. This fulfilled what was said about him in verse seven of our text. **(He) was despised and abhorred by the nation.**

They were just the same as the Jews of Isaiah's day. They both rejected God. So they needed to be spiritually restored. And they couldn't do it themselves.

So the Lord formed and polished his servant. He would be the one to save his people. He would restore us to a right relationship with God. He would do this through his suffering and death on the cross. For on the cross he took all our sins upon himself. He took away the guilt of all our sins. And he gave us his holiness and perfection. So in God's eyes we are restored to how he created us. We once again have the image of God, in which we were created. We are once again his own dear children.

So he reconciles us to God. We are gathered to him. Redeemed, restored, and forgiven. We have a right relationship with God once again. We are his and he is ours. Only God's servant, the God-man, Jesus Christ could have done this. No mere man can restore sinners to their God. But Jesus is God and man at the same time. He is our Lord and Savior who served as our substitute. Through him alone are we saved. And it is through faith in him that we'll live forever.

And Jesus did this for all people. Sure he was sent to the people of Israel. He was a descendent of David himself. And his ministry was among the Jews. But that wasn't good enough for Jesus. God had much more in plan for him. As God says to him in verse six, **It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of**

Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth. You have an expertly crafted tool. It is a precision instrument. Specifically engineered for a purpose. But then you take that expensive instrument and use it as a hammer. You have a picture that needs hanging so you pound a nail into the wall with this expensive tool. That is setting that tool woefully short. You aren't using it to its full potential.

Jesus is like an expertly crafted tool. Crafted and formed by the Lord. His power and glory wouldn't be limited to just the Jews. But he was to be sent to all people. Jews and Gentiles alike were saved by the Lord. For he died for the sins of the whole world. It wasn't just for some that Christ forgave—but all people, Jews and Gentiles alike. Through his death and resurrection Christ has brought salvation to the ends of the earth. Everyone who believes in him, regardless of age, sex, or ancestry will join him in heaven forever.

But he has that hidden glory. The divine majesty hidden the flesh of man. So he was rejected by some who saw him. His own country men despised him. The people of his generation abhorred him. And the same has stood throughout the generations. People in Isaiah's day rejected God. And people today fail to acknowledge Jesus as Lord. And even though Christ suffered and died for them, they will not receive what he has won for them. And they will suffer forever. The Israelites may have rejected him. So the gospel was sent elsewhere. To the Gentiles as Paul and Barnabus made it known. The gospel is now spread throughout the world. Salvation is brought to the ends of the earth. Jew and Gentile, young and old, rich and poor—many believe and have been restored to God. As the Lord said to his servant, Jesus, **Kings will see you and rise up, princes will see and bow down, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.**

You have that expertly crafted tool ready to use. Don't limit it by using it to hammer a nail into a wall. In Christ we have an expertly crafted substitute—Both God and man. It's too small and insignificant for him to only save the Jews, so he saved the whole world by living a perfect life, suffering and dying, and rising from the dead for all people. His glory may have been hidden. But it has now been

revealed in his Holy Word. So don't let his glory remain hidden for others. But spread the Word so that all people may know and believe and see the glory of the hidden Savior. Amen.