

- ¹ 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."

A MAN ON A MISSION

Can you believe that the primaries for the Presidential Election to be held in November have already begun? The January 3rd start in Iowa makes this election season that we are in exactly 10 months and 3 days long. And as if 10 months isn't long enough, they've been debating and campaigning for 6 months already. For 6 months we have been hearing what each candidate's plan is for improving our country and for the next 10 months, we will continue to hear the same thing. We will hear about each of the candidate's and their mission to become our next President.

And if you think that 16 months is a long time to be on a mission, you'll be floored by what you hear today. Today we read about a **Man on a Mission** much longer than a presidential campaign. His mission was planned before the creation of the world and God had spent 4,000 years revealing bits and pieces of that mission plan. Today we will hear one such revelation. Today we'll be encouraged that our Savior is a **Man on a Mission**. We will learn about that mission from Isaiah's prophetic words, recorded 700 years before Jesus was born. These words will reveal for us two parts of Jesus' mission. They will tell us that Jesus was on a mission 1) to be a weapon and to 2) be a light.

1. To Be a Weapon

It is fitting that today, on the day we observe Jesus' baptism, that we would look at Jesus' mission. In a sense, his mission began on that day. While Jesus was born 30 years before, and had been living in perfection for our sakes all the while, his active and open public ministry began on the day that he was baptized. The Holy Spirit came down on him like a dove and the Father spoke his words of approval from above. The triune God was there, giving approval, making note of this momentous day, when the plan of salvation would begin to be revealed in the person of Jesus.

Baptism day for Jesus was the day that he got his marching orders. It was the day that he was identified as a special servant of the Lord and the day that the public began to recognize him for who he was, the Son of God. The day that he was baptized was the day that Jesus revealed to the rest of the world that he is **A Man on a Mission**.

Do Isaiah's words about Jesus' mission seem awkward or out of place to you? 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.*** Wasn't it just days ago that we worshipped Jesus as the Prince of Peace? How is he now on a mission of war? Maybe a visual will help. Imagine for yourselves what a UN Peacekeeper would look like. Does the vision in your head wear a tie-dyed shirt, have long hair and make the peace signs at everyone he meets? Hardly. A Peacekeeper is dressed like a warrior. He is covered with body armor and wears a helmet. He has military boots and is holding a really big rifle. He keeps the peace by threatening those who would try to break the peace. He must be able to defeat the ones that would try to tyrannize and terrorize the people around. He has to be able to defeat the enemy to keep the peace. Jesus could only become the Prince of Peace by winning the war. He waged war on the one who threatened to take away our peace. He came to fight a war against the devil and it's a war that he won. He defeated sin, death, and the devil, so that he could bring us lasting peace.

During the Old Testament times, God had hidden Jesus. He revealed him only in prophecies and promises, but with his birth, the time of hiding was done. That's what God was talking about when he mentioned that Jesus would be a **When God sent this world his Son, he revealed him to the world as the weapon that would defeat the forces of evil for the world.**

It is interesting exactly what type of weapon God made Jesus to be. Let me read you those words again. ***He made my mouth like a sharpened sword,*** It was Jesus' mouth that would be his weapon. He didn't wage a physical war with his arms, instead he engaged in a spiritual battle with his words. Jesus spoke his words of truth and it was enough to fell the Father of Lies. The writer to the Hebrews tells of the power of the words of God. ***For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart*** (Hebrews 4:12). As Christ speaks, he speaks power. He would speak to the wind and waves and they would listen. He spoke to the demons and they did as he said. He spoke his words of law and gospel and they invoked change in people's hearts.

And his words still have power today. When we begin to look at ourselves as somehow spiritually desirable to God, he shows us the mirror of his law and reminds us how we really stack up before him. When we feel like we have earned some favor before God because of our faithfulness, he reminds us that ***all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*** When we begin to compare ourselves to others around us and become prideful that we are not like they, God reminds us that the only comparison that matters is us to his holiness. God's words are still a weapon today – a weapon that cut us to the heart and puts us in our place. God's Words convict us of our proper guilt and sentence us to the punishment in hell that we deserve.

God's words of law are powerful enough to convict, but his words of gospel are powerful enough to acquit. Even though his words expose the reality of our sin, they reveal an even more powerful reality, the reality of God's love. His words of forgiveness change us from condemned sinners to justified saints. His words are powerful enough to move us from hell to heaven. His words make an eternal difference in our lives.

Another weapon picture that is drawn of Jesus is this: ***he made me into a polished arrow***. Once you let an arrow fly out of the bow, there is no stopping it. You can't stop it or call it back, once it has been released, it will reach its target. When Jesus was revealed and released in the world there was no stopping him. The devil tried as hard as he could. He tried to tempt him to sin, his sent enemies to try to trap him or to try to kill him, but they all failed. Jesus proceeded onward on his mission until he reached his target, the cross. There Jesus laid down his life for the sins of the world. There he paid the price for our forgiveness. There with his dying breath our **Man on a Mission** told us all that his Mission was accomplished. He said of his mission to save the world, ***it is finished***.

Jesus is a **Man on a Mission**. He was sent to be a weapon – to destroy the power of death in the world. To win the war over sin and Satan and share his victory with the world. Jesus accomplished that victory, but his mission didn't end there. He was sent also to be a light.

2. To Be a Light

From little on, children are taught, "There is nothing too big or too small for God." He can do the big and miraculous, but he will attend to the little things that his people bring to him. Nothing is too small for God.

But God tells us about one thing that would be too small for him. In talking with his Servant, Jesus, God 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.*** It would be too small for Jesus to just be the Savior of the Jews. It would be too small for Jesus to just be the Savior of a select few, that's why God sent him to be the world's Savior. He paid for the sins of the whole wide world on Calvary's cross. He made the full payment for all people who had lived, were living, and would live in the future. He paid for every sin that the people of this world would commit. To do anything less would be too small a measure for Christ to take. To offer forgiveness to fewer than the whole world would be less than the measure of his love.

Because our God is so great, and because our Savior is a God of love, he came to be a light. He shone his love on us to free us from the darkness. He took Gentiles like you and me and adopted us to be a part of his chosen people. He brought salvation to our people, too. And even greater than that, he made it yours and mine. Like the Spirit descending like a dove on Jesus at his baptism, that same spirit invisibly descended into your heart and mine when we were baptized. There was no dove here this morning on Mackenzi's shoulder, but the Spirit entered her heart – our God and his powerful word has promised it is so. The sky didn't open up this morning, and the only voice you heard was mine, but it was God speaking through me to announce forgiveness and acceptance for Mackenzi. It was God speaking through the pastor that baptized you saying, "This is my child whom I love, with you I am well pleased." Through baptism, the light of salvation shines into our dark hearts, and works faith and forgiveness and eternal life. That light continues to shine as his gospel is heard and studied. That light

Isaiah 49:1-6

strengthens the faith of all who join together to partake of his holy supper. Through his Means of Grace, that gospel light of salvation continues to shine into our hearts.

Jesus is a **Man on a Mission**. And now his mission continues through us. Now we can be on a mission to serve him with gladness. Now we are on a mission to bring glory to God's name with our lives of willing obedience. God's gospel mission continues through us, who can reflect the light of his love to those in our lives. We can seek to spread his message of light and love. We can tell those around us about Jesus' mission to save the lost. We can tell them that Jesus' paid for all the world's sins. We can tell them about the pardon and peace that is ours in Jesus, a pardon and peace that can be theirs too, through faith. We can tell of heavenly glory, which is God's free gift to all who believe in his name.

God go with you and bless you as you carry out your mission in Jesus' name!! Amen.