

Advent Reading for Monday, December 18, 2017 ***“Recognized by Only a Few” (Isaiah 53:1-2)***

Today and for the next four devotionals, we will be in Isaiah 53, the final of the four *Servant Songs*. This is also the chapter that contains the clearest and most definitive argument that God is the author of Scripture, and that Jesus is the fulfillment of messianic prophecy. The details of Christ’s sufferings are so precise in these verses that no human could have predicted them by accident, and no imposter fulfilled them by his cunning. Portions of this chapter are quoted directly in the New Testament on at least seven occasions, and referred to several other times without being actually quoted.

The opening two verses are our focus for today: *“Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For He grew up before Him as a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground (Isaiah 53:1-2).*

Implied in Isaiah’s initial question is that in spite of the overwhelming prophetic evidence, only a few would recognize *God’s Servant* when He arrived. While Jesus in His first Advent was the fulfillment of God’s promises, sadly, Israel did not welcome Him when He came, as the New Testament writers make clear.

The Apostle John emphasized this in the prologue to his gospel: *“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came unto His own, but His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe on His name” (John 1:10-12).* Later in his gospel, John expanded on their rejection, linking it to Isaiah’s prophetic question: *“Though He had performed so many miracles before them, yet they were not believing in Him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah, the prophet, which he spoke: ‘LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?’” (John 12:37-38)*

The phrase, *the arm of the Lord*, used other places in Scripture, refers to God’s power and might. Though His power was embodied in Jesus, the majority failed to see it. In contrast Jesus was pleasing in the eyes of His Father as *He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of*

parched ground. This reminds us of the poverty into which Jesus was born, and how He rose to His purpose in relatively obscure conditions, making His true identity visible only to those who believed.

Interestingly, the Apostle Paul applied Isaiah's prophecy to the unbelief of the world as a whole: *“They did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, ‘LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?’ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ”* (Romans 10:16-17).

In reflecting on this and the other prophecies, we see how Isaiah was blessed to see, at least to a degree, the One of whom He was writing. The Apostle John makes this clear: *“These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him”* (John 12:41). The question for us is whether our eyes and hearts are open to see *His glory* and receive from Him all He has promised.

Giving Thanks – Thank You for opening the eyes of our hearts to see Your glory! Enable us to rejoice in You and bring You glory!