

Give You as a Light

January 18, 2026

Isaiah 49:1-7

¹ Listen to me, coastlands; pay attention, peoples far away. The Lord called me before my birth, called my name when I was in my mother's womb. ² He made my mouth like a sharp sword, and hid me in the shadow of God's own hand. He made me a sharpened arrow, and concealed me in God's quiver, ³ saying to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I show my glory." ⁴ But I said, "I have wearied myself in vain. I have used up my strength for nothing." Nevertheless, the Lord will grant me justice; my reward is with my God.

⁵ And now the Lord has decided — the one who formed me from the womb as his servant — to restore Jacob to God, so that Israel might return to him. Moreover, I'm honored in the Lord's eyes; my God has become my strength.

⁶ He said: It is not enough, since you are my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the survivors of Israel. Hence, I will also appoint you as light to the nations so that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

⁷ The Lord, redeemer of Israel and its holy one, says to one despised, rejected by nations, to the slave of rulers: Kings will see and stand up; commanders will bow down on account of the Lord, who is faithful, the holy one of Israel, who has chosen you.

John 1:29-42

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is the one about whom I said, 'He who comes after me is really greater than me because he existed before me.' ³¹ Even I didn't recognize him, but I came baptizing with water so that he might be made known to Israel." ³² John testified, "I saw the Spirit coming down from heaven like a dove, and it rested on him.

³³ Even I didn't recognize him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'The one on whom you see the Spirit coming down and resting is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴ I have seen and testified that this one is God's Son.'

³⁵ The next day John was standing again with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus walking along he said, "Look! The Lamb of God!" ³⁷ The two disciples heard what he said, and they followed Jesus.

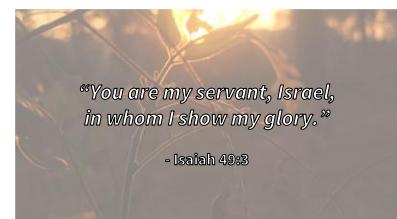
³⁸ When Jesus turned and saw them following, he asked, "What are you looking for?" They said, "Rabbi (which is translated Teacher), where are you staying?"

³⁹ He replied, "Come and see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

⁴⁰ One of the two disciples who heard what John said and followed Jesus was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. ⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Christ). ⁴² He led him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).



Today we begin this time in Isaiah 49. This is the second Servant Song in the book of Isaiah. This one is personal. The prophet uses the first person to drive home the intimate connection that we have with the Lord our God. This connection invites us to consider how God reveals God's glory through us, the servants of God. On Monday, as I read and pondered verses 1-4, my focus settled for a moment on verse 3, where I read: "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I show my glory," and I wondered, is God talking to me here? There is a question as to whether, at the time, Isaiah was speaking of himself or of the nation Israel.

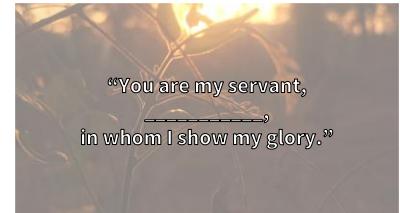


While either or both can be true, what if God is also speaking to you and to me, drawing us into these words, inviting us to live our lives in ways that reveal the glory of God? Reading the text this way, it opens us up to the possibility for the substance of our faith – the day to day living – to be the ways that we reveal God’s glory and the light of God within us to the world. As tempting as it may be in the day and age that we are currently living in to inundate God with all of the terrible things happening in our nation and world right now, that is not our call, that is not our job. No, our job is to be about the work of addressing the troubles and trials of life in this world. In this work, we must remind one another that God, the one who gives us as light, is the source of our light. Acknowledging this, we can then be a part of this light that we proclaim to the world. As we prepare to enter deeper into the idea of being given as the light, let us begin with a word of prayer...



God of love, you have given us as light to the nations. Speak to us now and fill us with the light of your Word. Show us Jesus, so we might see, and follow. It is with this plea that I ask you, O God, to bless the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts. You are our rock and our redeemer, our Christ and our king. Amen.

Please turn with me to Isaiah 49 as we begin. In the first verse we are reminded that God called us before birth, when we were still in the womb. This continues the “chosen” theme that we have looked at the past two weeks. The calling that Isaiah speaks of is a calling by name. While we may sometimes not feel called by God, in truth we are all called. To that point, I invite you to repeat these words after me, with your name inserted in place of the word ‘Israel.’



For me, it would sound this way: “You are my servant, John, in whom I show my glory.” You try it, quietly saying these words with your name in the blank: “You are my servant, _____, in whom I show my glory.” Repeat it again. One more time – because things often happen in threes in the Bible! As you say these words, with your name in the verse, how does it feel?

When we insert our name in this verse it is both a high calling and a profound blessing. It reminds us that, yes, we were chosen and called before birth, when yet in the womb. It reminds us that God can indeed reveal God’s glory in and through us as God gives us as a light to the world. Please turn with me to John 1 as we flesh out what this high call can look like and at how it can be a profound blessing to those who respond to the call. In this passage, John is witnessing to the divinity and power of Jesus Christ.

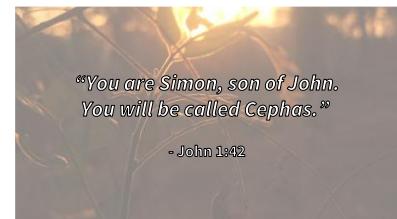


As Jesus is nearing where John the Baptist is at, John proclaims, “*Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*” John then offers testimony that supports this claim. In verse 32 John says, “*I saw the Spirit coming down from heaven like a dove, and it rested on him.*” We read about this last week in our Matthew 3 passage. The Spirit that came down upon the human Jesus is the same Holy Spirit that the divine Jesus sends to all who come to believe in him as Lord and Savior. It is the same Holy Spirit that we receive when we accept Jesus into our hearts. It is this Spirit that we helped send into three newly baptized hearts last Sunday, as we welcomed them into God’s family and into the community of faith.



The story then jumps to the next day. Again, John the Baptist is there with two of his disciples. And again, John declares Jesus to be the Lamb of God. This time, the two disciples leave John and begin to follow Jesus, literally walking along behind him. After being asked what they are looking for, Jesus invites these two to “*Come and see.*” Jesus is inviting them to step into the waters of faith, to wade in just a bit, so that they can discover their call and can begin to live into their chosenness. It is a simple yet profound call.

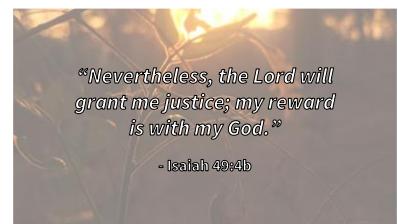
Just spending a little time with Jesus, Andrew is changed. Sensing the new life that he is about to step into, he goes and finds his brother, a man named Simon Peter. Witnessing to what is happening in his heart and life, Andrew proclaims to Peter, “*We have found the Messiah.*” We have found the one who will save Israel from her sins. Andrew leads his brother to Jesus, who says to him, “*You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas*” (or Peter). With these words, Jesus is reiterating Isaiah 49’s words, this time to Peter: he has been called. He has been named by God as a servant of God. Peter is right where God has meant him to be all along. Jesus is saying to Peter what we said earlier to ourselves, “You are my servant, Peter, in whom I show my glory.”



While the call of God upon our lives is both a high calling and a profound blessing, it is something that we can struggle to believe and/or to live into. That’s why I wanted to spend a few minutes in John 1. Most of us, you see, have an advantage over Andrew and Peter. Most of us have been on a long walk of faith. We learned long ago who and what Jesus was and is. We’ve known for a while that Jesus calls us to make disciples of all nations, going even to the ends of the earth. We’ve known God’s calling for a long time now.

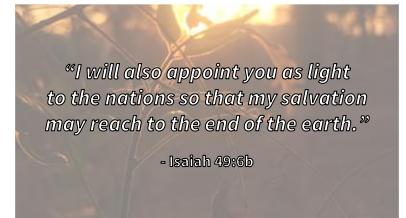
Andrew and Simon, yes, they were likely devout Jews, raised in the church, so to speak. They had maybe heard a bit about this Jesus fellow. But there have been no miracles yet, no teachings to awe the crowds. They have simply heard John the Baptist' proclamation about Jesus and have chosen to come and see who this Jesus might be. They found him to be the Messiah. My friends, if these unequipped, uneducated men can sense and follow the call of the one whom they have just met, how much more able are we who have known and walked long with Jesus able to respond to his call to be given as light to the world?

As we continue, please turn back with me to Isaiah 49, to the second Servant Song. As we turn to verse 4, we find another reason that speaks to why we can make choice to respond to the call. In this verse we first see that the servant feels as we do at times: wearied and weak. In this state, we can easily tell ourselves that the call is not ours to respond to in that time or in that season of life when we feel downtrodden. When we are feeling that way, when we feel as if our own light has just about gone out, when we are doubting our ability to respond to God's invitation to be sent as light, we need to hear the words in the rest of verse 4: "*Nevertheless, the Lord will grant me justice; my reward is with my God.*"



Whatever has worn us down and sapped our strength, God will bring us justice. God will one day make things right again in our lives and in our world. One day, God will restore the relationship that was broken, will heal what was damaged, will repair what was harmed. That's the promise in verse 5. And that is surely part of our reward for choosing to walk daily with the Lord. God is with us here and now, all the time. God works for our good and wholeness. The other reward comes in the long term, in the day when we will stand in God's glory in heaven. God will be with us forever.

Moving on into verses 6 and 7, we see the scope of the call that God places upon God's servants. Here the prophet writes that it is "*not enough*" to just bring back and restore the tribes of Jacob, to return the people of God to what they once were. No, God thinks bigger than that, has greater visions than simply that. At the end of verse 6 we get a glimpse of God's grand plan for the faithful people of God. Here we read, "*I will also appoint you as light to the nations so that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.*" No, Jesus was not the originator of the idea of making disciples of all nations. That has always been God's master plan for the world that God created.



Yes, the Jewish people and then the Gentiles, and then you and I, were chosen to be God's instruments for the salvation of the world – "*to the end of the earth.*" Yes, we are chosen, but we are not special. God doesn't choose some small, elect group. God's family is not 144,000 or any other number, at least not according to Isaiah and to Jesus. While this is a big task and while we may not feel up to it individually, there is good news. We are called to a vision that is far bigger than we are, but that is far smaller than the God we serve. In verse 7 the prophet Isaiah proclaims, "*Kings will see and stand up; commanders will bow down on account of the Lord, who is faithful.*" One day every knee will bow. One day every voice will declare that God reigns. One day salvation will come to the end of the earth.

While this 'one day' is a day that we may not see, we believe that the day will come. With this belief, we choose to carry the light to the nations. We are called to be a part of a grand vision that we cannot see. It is the bringing of the kingdom of God to earth as it is in heaven. If we step into our call, into the invitation to be given as the light, then we carry a light that shines beyond us and is within us. Doing so we become a part of the light.

Becoming a part of the light, we begin living daily our forever reality. Living as God's chosen, we come to reveal the glory of "*the holy one of Israel*," our God "who has chosen you." Chosen so that God may give you as a light, may give me as a light, may give us all as a light to the world. For this chosenness, we say thanks be to God. Alleluia and amen!

Grow, Pray, Study

- 1) *Grow.* Take time each day this week praying the line, "You are my servant, ___ , in whom I show my glory." How might you increasingly live into this promise?
- 2) *Pray.* God promises to be with us, to use us as a servant, to give us as a light to the nations. Which is hardest to believe right now? Pray for God to all you need.
- 3) *Study.* Read Isaiah 49:8-12. In what ways will God and God's people shining the light impact the world? Where do you most long to see this happen right now?