



[Title Slide] [Open by lighting a candle] Who loves fire? I can be a bit of a pyro at times. I love building massive fires; they're so powerful, aren't they? I've been to bonfires where they were so big I needed to be dozens of feet away or it would be too hot to take. It's incredible. A massive fire can be too powerful to contain, can't it?

Yeah, bonfires are pretty much the opposite of this candle. It wouldn't take much at all for me to put it out, yet today we're going to read a Scripture passage that claims the world will be remade with a power so gentle it wouldn't even blow out this candle. Fascinating, right?

Today, we are kicking off four weeks in the book of Isaiah, which can be intimidating. It's a big book with a lot to say. We're going to focus on four passages that describe the Suffering Servant; they're an important part of Isaiah. But first, let me give you a little context.

Isaiah is 66 chapters long. Yeah, it's one of the bigger books in the Bible. Isaiah was a prophet who warned the Israelites repeatedly that if they didn't shape up, judgment would follow. The first 39 chapters chronicle those warnings, but the people didn't listen, and so, God allowed them to be conquered by the Babylonians. Judgment had arrived. We've read about that judgment in other parts of the Old Testament; it was a big deal so multiple books cover it. That's when Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were taken off to Babylon along with many others. It was a devastating time for the Israelites. Their nation destroyed, their people exiled, it seemed hope was gone for God's chosen people.

Isaiah 40 picks up after this judgment and begins the prophet's call to the people to make God their center once again. Over the course of the remaining chapters of Isaiah, there are four passages that highlight the Suffering Servant. There has been debate about who exactly Isaiah is describing, but spoiler alert, it's prophetic writing about the coming Messiah, Jesus. It's writing challenges God's followers to emulate this Servant, to live a different way, a holier, better way. Today, we're looking at the first of these four passages. It opens with God speaking:

[Slide] *Isaiah 42:1-9 (NLT) ¹“Look at my servant, whom I strengthen. He is my chosen one, who pleases me. I have put my Spirit upon him. He will bring justice to the nations. ²He will not shout or raise his voice in public.*

God opens with who this Servant is; the Servant is God’s chosen one, He pleases God, He works through God’s Spirit. This Servant is deeply related and connected to God, He is different than anything the world has experienced. He is calm, quiet, yet powerful enough to bring justice to the world.

[Slide] *³He will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle. He will bring justice to all who have been wronged. ⁴He will not falter or lose heart until justice prevails throughout the earth. Even distant lands beyond the sea will wait for his instruction.”*

The Servant’s task was clear, wasn’t it? And it was emphatic. Three times the word “justice” was used in these first few verses. God was beating this drum hard.

[Slide] Let’s talk about this word “justice” for a moment. Not to go full nerd on you, but it’s translated from the ancient Hebrew word, **Mišpāṭ**. Our English word “justice” does not carry as broad a meaning as the Hebrew word communicates; we tend to think of justice as something won in the courts, enforced by police. We have phrases like “social justice” that have grown in use over the years as we’ve started to think bigger than just legal terms.

Let me show you two of the many places Isaiah uses **Mišpāṭ**;

[Slide] *Isaiah 1:17 (NLT) Learn to do good. Seek **justice**. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows.*

[Slide] *Isaiah 30:18 (NLT) So the Lord must wait for you to come to him so he can show you his love and compassion. For the Lord is a **faithful** God. Blessed are those who wait for his help.*

If you’re looking at the second one and thinking, “I don’t see the word ‘justice’” in that verse, you would be correct. Here **Mišpāṭ** is translated “faithful.” Fascinating, right? This one word gets translated several ways in the Old Testament, all of which give us a bigger picture of what the Servant

is called to bring about. It's tied to helping the oppressed, those in need, it's connected to God's love, compassion and faithfulness.

[Slide] *Psalm 25:9 (NLT) He leads the humble in **doing right**, teaching them his way.*

*Psalm 33:5 (NLT) He loves whatever is just and **good**; the unfailing love of the Lord fills the earth.*

In Psalms 25:9 it's translated as "doing right", in Psalm 33:5, it's translated as "good."

Miṣpāṭ, the justice the Servant is called to bring, is that of restoring our world to what God created it to be, what God called good in the first chapters of Genesis. A world without pain, hurt, evil, and all the things that have made this such an unjust world for everyone. It's a world where people are faithful, do right, where the world is good. The Servant was chosen to bring hope, the hope of restoration, the hope of healing, the hope of goodness for all humanity and creation. The Servant will restore the world to the life God intended for us.

Knowing that, let's get back to Isaiah 42:

[Slide] *⁵ God, the Lord, created the heavens and stretched them out. He created the earth and everything in it. He gives breath to everyone, life to everyone who walks the earth. And it is he who says,*

[Slide] *⁶ "I, the Lord, have called you to demonstrate my righteousness. I will take you by the hand and guard you, and I will give you to my people, Israel, as a symbol of my covenant with them. And you will be a light to guide the nations.*

[Slide] *⁷ You will open the eyes of the blind. You will free the captives from prison, releasing those who sit in dark dungeons.*

[Slide] *⁸ "I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to anyone else, nor share my praise with carved idols. ⁹ Everything I prophesied has come true, and now I will prophesy again. I will tell you the future before it happens."*

This is God reminding us that He is the God of all creation, of all the universe. His power is greater than anything else known or unknown, and it

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