

God's Servant Is Blind?!?

Isaiah 42:13-25

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Introduction

Truly, ever since we began chapter 40,

- Isaiah has been serving up a feast of encouragement.
- He has been ministering words of tremendous comfort for those who love God's kingdom and grace.
- They are not words of comfort such as the world gives.
 - They are not words that encourage us with how great we are in ourselves or of how we have the power within us.
 - They are words that tell us that even though we are a mess,
 - God Himself has taken it upon Himself to save His people from their sin and misery.

They are words that are given to Israel in the time when their own failing as God's people had reached a climax...

- When they were to be driven out of the land that God had given to them where they were called to be a people for Him,
 - a people who lived by His grace,
 - who had His word and promises among them and walked in it,
 - a people who were His own people, a kingdom of righteousness redeemed by His grace and power.
- But now, because of a general refusal among them to receive His grace,
 - the very symbols of that grace and of His presence were to be destroyed—
 - the very city that He had established was to become dust and rubble...
 - the very temple where He revealed Himself to be a God who was reconciled to them by the blood of the covenant was to be levelled.
 - the very sons of David in whom his rule and protection was to be seen among them were to become eunuchs in the courts of a ruthless pagan king!
- What are the godly among God's people to think in such times as these?
 - How are they to deal with such a crisis as this?
 - To put it in New Testament language,
 - What are we to do when the gospel is buried in the church under false teaching and false doctrine?

- What are we to do when God is not honoured and His ways are not followed by the very people who are supposed to represent Him?
- What are we to do when our enemies seem to have taken over and seem to have the upper hand?
- Shall we throw up our hands in despair and suppose that God's plan has failed?
- Shall we suppose that the Kingdom of righteousness that God promised shall never come to fruition?
- Is it all over?

Isaiah has given many wonderful encouragements already to tell God's people that it is not over... even in such desperate times as the time when they were to be exiled!

- In chapter 40, He declared that He Himself would come to save them...
 - And then to buttress that encouragement, He reminded us of His sovereign power as the One who ruled over all the nations!
- And then in chapter 41, He encouraged them that they were His servant that He had chosen for salvation.
 - And that the troubles that had come upon them were His chastisements to restore them.
 - He had told them beforehand that He was going to raise up enemies to oppress them and even to bring them into exile because of their sin.
 - He was merely working out His plan and it was for them to continue to trust in Him.
- And then last week, in chapter 42, He said amazing things about His servant...
 - things that seemed entirely impossible in their present condition!
 - He said that His servant would bring justice, or *mish-pawt*, to the nations!
 - *Mish-pawt* speaks of a kingdom of righteousness, where everything is right!
 - The Servant would even open the eyes of the blind so that could live in this righteous kingdom!
 - But how could a powerless, unrighteous nation like Israel possibly be the agent of reconciliation to the world?
 - I hope you know that answer to that!
 - It is in the promised seed of Abraham!
 - It is one individual who would bring righteousness and grace and salvation to the entire nation and to the ends of the earth!
 - It is in Jesus Christ!
 - From Isaiah 41:8 to Isaiah 55, the one that Isaiah calls "The servant of the LORD" is spoken of in most marvellous way...

- Sometimes, the servant is spoken of as blind and desperate, as we will see today in the second half of chapter 42.
- At other times, the servant is spoken of as the very source of righteousness and salvation to the world!
- There is no contradiction in this!
 - The servant is the entire visible church—all the people of God—a great assembly set apart for the LORD to be His own.
 - And there is one member who is born into the church, a son who is given to her to be a part of her, whose name is wonderful, counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the prince of peace...
 - And He is for her the very source of wisdom and righteousness and salvation and power and grace and forgiveness!
 - When Isaiah speaks of the servant as represented by Him, the servant is the very delight of the Father,
 - the One who brings salvation to the ends of the earth.
 - And within the servant, there is a mixture—
 - There are those who have union with the head, who trust in Him and look to Him for salvation and so are made partakers of righteousness and grace and blessing...
 - And then there are those in her constituency who are blinded and who suppose that they have life and salvation in themselves.
 - These are not the true sons of the kingdom—they are sons who will cast out.
 - And there are times in history when the servant is more characterised by these false sons than by the sons who partake of Christ.
 - Such were the days when Isaiah ministered...
 - Such were the days when the Messiah came into the world and most of the sons of the kingdom rejected Him...
 - Such are the days in which we live—when over 85% of the residents of Nova Scotia are baptised!
 - And it is obvious that they are not partaking of the righteousness and life and grace of Jesus Christ
- All this explains that great contrast that we find, even within chapter 42, in the way that Isaiah speaks of the servant of the LORD.
 - In verses 1-9, that we looked at last week, the servant is the delight of the Father, the one who establishes God's righteous kingdom among nations...
 - But in 19-25 we see the servant from a very different perspective...

- as one who is blind and deaf and who does not receive the life and righteousness and grace that are help out to her in God's covenant.
- How can *this* servant possibly bright righteousness (*mish-pawt*) to the nations?
 - It is only through Jesus Christ, her head, that the nations are blessed...
 - But it is also through her members as they find life in Him and spread His word to the nations...
 - And there are times when there are so few among them who do this—who truly have life and salvation in Him...
 - that they must be chastened—even brought into exile as they were in Isaiah's day...
 - and in those days, the gospel does not spread as it might have spread to the nations.

It can look so impossible when the church is weak and feeble and so full of sin, as they were when Isaiah spoke these words and as we are today!

- The truth is that they were not bringing life and light to the nations.
 - In the second half of chapter 42, this problem is frankly addressed.
 - This is our topic today as we look at verses 13-25.
 - This talks about when God's Servant (I mean the church as a whole in any particular age) is not a praise in the earth!

First there is an encouragement for us...

I. See here that the LORD is all the more zealous when you, His church, are under His chastisement.

- I mean that He becomes increasingly eager to bless the nations in those times when we are in no condition to spread His gospel.
 - His servant is not fit to spread His blessing to them and it only makes Him all the more zealous to do so!
 - See this in verses 13 & 14

A. This is an absolutely beautiful picture of the LORD's zeal to bring His salvation to His elect among the nations of the earth!

1. It speaks of the Lord's attitude when Israel had to be taken into exile because of her sin...
 - a. Far from being a light to the nations, they had brought reproach upon God's name.
 - He charges them with this in Ezekiel 36.
 - Ezekiel 36:16-20: Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying: "Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds; to Me their way was like the uncleanness of a woman in her customary impurity. Therefore I poured out My fury on them for the blood they had shed on the land, and for their idols with which they

had defiled it. So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judged them according to their ways and their deeds. When they came to the nations, wherever they went, they profaned My holy name—when they said of them, ‘These are the people of the LORD, and yet they have gone out of His land.’

- The nations around them saw their ungodliness and now they would see them taken into exile,
 - and they would praise their idols for giving them victory over the God of Israel!
 - b. We know better—we know that the LORD had told them that He was going to raise up these enemies because of their sin...
 - But still, God’s name, which ought to be praised among the nations, was dragged through the mud by all this... it was profaned by His own people.
 - And the nations, which God had purposed to save, were left without a clear witness of Him in the earth!
2. And so the LORD presents Himself to us as one who is bursting with desire to bring forth what He has promised to the nations!
- a. First, He presents Himself as a warrior bursting forth onto the battle field with a great shout to gain His prize!
 - Look at verse 13:
 - Isa 42:13: “The LORD shall go forth like a mighty man; He shall stir up *His* zeal like a man of war. He shall cry out, yes, shout aloud; He shall prevail against His enemies.”
 - The emphasis is on His enthusiasm.
 - All the time that Israel had been in exile and under His chastisement, He has been yearning to act!

TRANS> This becomes all the more clear in verse 14:

- b. Here He explains that He has had to restrain all this time!
 - See? verse 14 says:
 - Isa 42:14: "I have held My peace a long time, I have been still and restrained Myself.
 - 1) He has been like a warrior ready to break forth who must be restrained until the proper time!
 - 2) He gives an even more amazing picture as the verse continues...
 - He describes himself as a woman in labour—
 - panting and gasping that He might bring forth what He has conceived in his womb!

- He is yearning to bring life and salvation to the nations!
3. It is amazing that the LORD of glory should stoop to present Himself to us like this... all to show us His zeal!
- a. It is not that He was frustrated with His own plan...
 - He is just showing us very clearly that He was never indifferent about the plight of the nations.
 - All those years of silence to them—before the gospel was sent forth—were years of yearning for the day when they would be called!
 - b. And this teaches us something for today...
 - It teaches us that when we are like we are at this present time—
 - When the church is weak and sinful and not a praise in the earth...
 - when the LORD must chasten us and turn us over to trouble...
 - The LORD's zeal to bring the nations to Himself is only increasing!
 - The longer He waits on account of our disobedience, the more zealous He grows to bring everything under the feet of Jesus.
 - c. Throughout the years of Israel's history,
 - His yearning to bring forth Christ and to send out His call to the nations grew stronger and stronger...
 - He had no pleasure in bringing Israel into exile—it was a necessary part of His marvellous plan—
 - but His yearning was for the day when the gospel would go forth to the Gentiles as He had promised to Abraham.
 - In the same way, He had not pleasure in the 40 years in the wilderness—
 - He was ready to bring them in before that...
 - And His yearning to bring them in only increased during the 40 years.
 - And so it is today that throughout the long years of church history as He calls the nations to himself —
 - and then as we sin and He must chasten us rather than moving on with His plan,
 - He is all the while yearning for the advance of His kingdom.
 - Did Jesus not tell us pray, “Thy Kingdom come”? that His will would be done on earth as it is in Heaven?”
 - His will is *mish-pawt* to the ends of the earth!

- B. And look at what happens when He breaks forth to do His gracious will!
1. Once the appointed time comes, He completely overcomes whatever gets in His way!
 - Verse 15 describes Him levelling mountains and drying up rivers...
 - We may think of Israel coming out of Egypt with mountains on one side and the red sea on another, and the Egyptian army in pursuit...
 - And the LORD dried up the river for them to cross over!
 - Then there is the mountain of opposition that Zerubbabel faced in Zech 4 when it was time to re-build the temple, and the angel said:
 - Zechariah 4:6-7: "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts. 'Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone With shouts of "Grace, grace to it!'"
 - Two weeks ago we saw in chapter 41 how Jacob the worm would be turned into a mighty threshing sledge with sharp teeth that would chew up mountains and spit them out.
 - As promised in chapter 40, every mountain and hill will be made low.
 - Once the time comes that the LORD has appointed for His salvation to break forth in the earth,
 - Any thing that stands in His way is overcome!
 - The sinful stubborn human heart is subdued by His power...
 - Satan is brought down...
 - Kingdoms and nations are rendered powerless
 - Even death itself is conquered by our dear LORD Jesus who died for us and who will raise us up by His power...
 - There are no mountains and no rivers that can keep us from coming to God once He goes forth to save.
 2. Look at what this means for those who have been in darkness, far off from God by their own inward blindness and sin!
 - Verse 16 and 17 tell us
 - Isa 42:16-17: I will bring the blind by a way they did not know; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, And crooked places straight. These things I will do for them, And not forsake them. They shall be turned back, They shall be greatly ashamed, Who trust in carved images, Who say to the molded images, 'You are our gods.'
 - By His grace, these blind ones are enabled to see—and to walk in God's ways.
 - They come to realise how stupid it was of them to worship idols—their own versions of their creator...

- They turn from idols to serve the living God!
- They are greatly ashamed because now they see how sinful it was, how they were denying the obvious and pretending that it was not obvious.
- Oh blessed humiliation!
 - What a wondrous thing it is when God opens your eyes.
 - The truth is so fresh and so pure and you wonder how you could ever have missed it—how you could have avoided it for so long!
 - You are turned to His way!
 - The way of the true God who is all holy and all powerful and all sovereign!
 - The God who cannot be approached apart from the blood of the covenant, shed by His Son, to atone for sin!
 - What a wise, holy, just, beautiful, mighty, gracious, loving God He is!
 - It all comes home to you when your eyes are opened.
 - How zealous He is for your salvation!

II. See here that He calls you to come to this salvation!

- to receive it, to partake of it!

A. It is a call for you to do what is contrary to your nature as blind and deaf.

- Isa 42:18: Hear, you deaf! And look, you blind that you may see!”

1. You see? He is calling you to do what you cannot do!

- How can the deaf hear and the blind see?
 - It is because His call is a call that gives to us what is commanded of us.
 - In His effectual call, sight and hearing are given to those are called.
 - Even as He calls, He opens your ears and your eyes.
- His call is a powerful call that changes things.
 - We use words to describe what God has made, but His words create!
 - That is one of the great differences between God and us!
 - We point to a tree and say “tree,”
 - but God says “tree” and the tree appears.
 - It is there because He spoke it into existence by His word—that is what keeps it together.
- So He comes to ruined sinners grouping about in the darkness and says, “let there be light,” and they are suddenly able to see.

- This is what Paul speak of in 2 Cor 4:6
 - 2 Cor 4:6: For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
 - You see the glory of the God who can only be reconciled to sinners through Jesus Christ—
 - the glory of God revealed in Christ.
 - Don't you see?
 - Our whole nature is contrary to God...
 - As Romans 8:7 says,
 - “the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.”
 - We are in opposition to Him from the very roots of our nature.
 - We cannot endure a God who is so holy that we are consumed by His holy indignation and wrath if we should come into His presence apart from Jesus Christ...
 - But He changes all that by His powerful call.
 - He enables us to be convinced of our sin and to see the provision in Christ and to come willingly to receive life from Him.
2. This call is not just to Israel, but to the nations.
- It is a call that it to go out into all the earth.
 - The command to “Hear” and to “Look” are both in the plural...
 - The great passion and zeal that the Lord has had from the beginning is not only the salvation of Israel, but the salvation of the nations—
 - of the ends of the earth!
 - This zeal for the nations only grew while Israel was being brought through the exile, and even in subsequent times of the church's disobedience.
 - It is His will that the gospel be preached to every nation!
 - We are to go into all the world with the gospel.
 - As a sinful church, the gospel is hindered because the LORD has to chasten us when He might have made us a light to the nations.
 - Of course in saying this, I do not mean that His sovereign plan must be altered...
 - but in His plan it is that He should chasten us for our sins and that when He does so, the gospel should be kept back.
 - Think of this in a local church...

- When there is sin in your life, it must be dealt with—and the gospel does not go forth from us...
 - The elders are busy dealing with problems and the church is not ready to advance...
 - Those who ought to be mature are still having to have their diapers changed.
 - The church is a reproach to God instead of light to the nations.
 - But all the while God's call to both His people and to the Gentiles is:
 - "Hear, you deaf; And look, you blind, that you may see."

B. And in verse 19, the LORD turns to address His people in particular...about *their blindness*.

1. Plurals were used in verse 18, but in verse 19, it is singular because He is addressing Israel, His servant.

- And you see that He reproaches them for their blindness!
 - Isa 42:19: Who is blind but My servant, Or deaf as My messenger whom I send? Who is blind as he who is perfect, And blind as the LORD'S servant?

a. It is astonishing that *they* could be so blind.

- This is God's own servant, the one that He had chosen to be His own!
 - This is the nation that He had delivered out of Egypt, showing them that He was LORD!
 - This is the people that He had fed with manna in the wilderness and with water from the rock.
 - This is the people to whom He had given His oracles—
 - His promises, His commandments, His ordinances that set forth His mercy and grace!
- Truly, as Moses had said to them,
 - "The word was near them, in their mouth and in their heart!"
 - They were surrounded by the light and by His gracious working!
 - and *they* were blind!
 - This is brought out in verse 20 where He says to them:
 - Isa 42:20: Seeing many things, but you do not observe; Opening the ears, but he does not hear."
 - God's revelation was all around them for them to see, but seeing they did not see and hearing they did not hear.

- That is the condition of so many who are baptised in the name of Christ and do not believe the gospel.
 - A crucified saviour is clearly presented to them, crucified for our sins, and they do not see!
 - They are numb to it all.
 - They are like spiritual zombies—surrounded by everything that gives spiritual life, but dead in their sins.
 - Walking around with God’s word on their lips, but believing not and obeying not.
- b. This is a blindness that cannot even be compared with that of the nations!
- This is why He says,
 - “Who is blind *but* my servant!”
 - as if they are the only ones that were blind.
 - The nations did not have the word brought to them—God had not separated them out.
 - But Israel had all these and yet was blind!
 - Three times He says that they are blind in this one verse!
 - Blind, blind, blind are those in the covenant who do not see!
 - Is this not the inspiration for Paul’s prayer for the church at Ephesus? when he said:
 - Eph 1:15 Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.
 - They saw, and he gave thanks for it—but he prays earnestly that they will keep on seeing.

- Later on, in Revelation, we see that this very church had begun to grow dim in their sight...
 - They had lost their first love.
 - They were not as enamoured with Jesus as they once were.

- Oh my brothers and sisters, don't you see how privileged you are?
 - Just look at the wonderful names by which God calls them! Honourable names! Names of personal connection with Him!
 - **My servant!**
 - We saw in 41:8 that God called them His servant whom He had chosen.
 - They were chosen for God—to do His will!
 - The very thing that we were all created to do and that we lost in the fall.
 - We are here for Him, and they were restored to that...
 - but being blind and deaf, they did not know His will.
 - **My messenger!**
 - Yes, they were the ones who were to bring His blessing of salvation to the nations!
 - That is what you are if you are part of the church today—
 - but being blind and deaf, they did not know the message...
 - just like so many in the church today who do not know the gospel because they are lost.
 - **He who is perfect!**
 - This speaks either of one who had been brought into a condition of peace or of one who had repaid—
 - Which ever the case, the LORD had provided atonement for them, reconciling them by the blood of the covenant.

TRANS> They had all this, but they were blind!

2. And it is not that the LORD was working against them, for He is well-pleased for to exalt His law and to make it honourable... through them!
 - They were to be His instruments—the one who lived out His truth in the world as a light to the world.
 - a. When He first called Israel to be His people, He said:

- Deut 4:5-9 "Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?"
 - As God's servant and messenger who had been reconciled to Him,
 - it was their high privilege and calling to bring honour to Him by doing His will among the nations, lost in their sin.
 - In this way, they would show forth His righteousness and make His law honourable.
- b. And Jesus tells us the same sort of thing...
- He says,
 - Lu 12:32: Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.
 - God desires that we live in *mish-pat*, in His righteous kingdom so that we shine as lights for Him in a dark world.
 - If we want to serve Him in His kingdom, His grace is there for us in Jesus Christ!
 - It has always been there for His people and He delights to give it to all who come.
 - If you will not come, it is your own fault.
 - In John 15, He tells us:
 - John 15:5-8: I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.
 - It honours Him for us live the new life that we are given by the grace of Jesus Christ our Saviour.
 - It brings glory to His law and causes the nations to see what a great God He is and how great His ways are.
 - And then they come to learn of His way and we tell them of the Saviour that He sent.
 - We are His messenger to the nations.

- c. But there was this great problem when we are a rebellious church...
 - The nations that God yearns to reach might be interested in learning about God, but they find that we are as blind as they are!
 - This is much to be lamented!
 - And we ourselves also miss out on the joy of being God's servant and messenger and the delight of His eyes.
 - Instead, we are a reproach to His name and the only way He can make His law honourable is by chastening us.
 - And so He comes to us in our blindness—
 - whether we be Gentiles or whether we be numbered among His people who have ears but do not hear and eyes but do not see, and He says,
 - “Hear you deaf, and look you blind that you may see!”
 - It is all here for you if you will have it!
 - He calls you to come and receive it!

TRANS> And now I want you to consider...

III. What a great folly it is for you to be unmindful of His gracious call!

A. Just look at the miserable condition of the rebellious servant.

1. They were supposed to be a praise in the earth, but instead they were going into exile to serve a sinful nation!
 - Look at how their piteous condition is described in verse 22.
 - Isa 42:22: But this is a people robbed and plundered; all of them are snared in holes, And they are hidden in prison houses; They are for prey, and no one delivers; For plunder, and no one says, "Restore!"
2. Instead of leading the nations to the LORD, they are hiding in the rocks and locked away in prison.
 - a. We know, of course, how the apostle Paul was in prison because of righteousness,
 - and how he explains that even though he is in prison, the word of God is not bound...
 - We know how Daniel was in captivity and that for him, his exile was a place of even greater opportunity to show forth the excellence of Jehovah.
 - But we are not talking about persecution for righteousness sake.

- We are talking about when God's people as a whole in a region must be chastened because they have refused to partake of God's salvation.
 - Indeed, Daniel was blessed in the exile, the nation was exiled into the shadows when they might have been a city set on hill because of their sin and disobedience.
 - Even Paul was there because of the disobedience of the nation as a whole.

- b. You see, at a time when their obedience would have made them the head of the nations,
 - Israel was in exile because of their sin and disobedience.
 - When they should have been a bright light shining among the nations, they were a reproach and brought shame to the name of the LORD.
 - In Isaiah 5, the parable of the unfruitful vineyard, Isaiah declared that
 - if there were no fruit from God's people,
 - there would be no protection for God's people.

- c. That is how the church in North America is today.
 - We are afraid and we are mocked and laughed at when we ought to be those who strike fear in the hearts of our enemies.
 - God's hand of chastisement is upon us and there is no one to deliver us.
 - There are economic troubles,
 - There are storms,
 - There is social unrest,
 - There is an alarming divorce rate,
 - There is danger in the streets rather than peace and safety,
 - There is deception in the market place,
 - There are all sorts of addictions,
 - and foreign enemies threaten us and daily increase in power against us.
 - And here we are in Nova Scotia, a population in which over 85% of us are baptised!
 - What would we be if we truly partook of Christ!
 - We are Christian, but we are not Christian!
 - We are children who are corruptors and have gone far astray.
 - We have squandered our inheritance and the LORD has brought all this upon us.
 - What we be even as a local congregation if we would partake of the fullness of Jesus Christ and put away our pettiness!

B. And the great problem is that nobody considers that the LORD has brought chastisement upon us!

- No one considers why we are the way we are!

1. We are insensible of His judgements that are sent to wake us up!

- Many among the baptised attribute these things to Satan getting the upper hand.
 - They do not see that God raised up enemies to chasten us because of our sin.
 - Yes, Satan may be the agent who delivers these troubles, who inspires Babylon and Assyria and Rome and Islam...
 - Wicked nations may be the agents who deliver God's chastening...
 - Storms and forces of nature may be the tools that God uses...
 - But it is the LORD who is back of it all—He brings these things upon us because of our sins as His people!
 - We are in hidey holes instead of a light on a hill because of His hand of chastisement.
 - The goal is not to get on the hill, but to repent and start feeding on God's grace!
 - Then we will be a light to the nations!
 - But we are stubborn and will not feast on the bread of life.

2. Hear how Isaiah speaks to such stubbornness:

- a. First, He shows that the truth that God is chastening us is not a message that is ordinarily heard.
- Isa 42:23 Who among you will give ear to this? Who will listen and hear for the time to come?
 - It is more comfortable for us to say that God did not send these things.
 - We do not want to admit that He is a God of judgement.
 - We do not want to think that He is displeased with us.
 - We do not want to repent, so we don't consider where our troubles have come from.
 - We see this today.
 - Many don't even have a theology that allows for it.
 - They do not believe that God is sovereign in these matters and that He sends trouble upon us like this.
 - There is a dualistic understanding that supposes that Satan sends the trouble and God sends the blessing
 - But this is so contrary to scripture.

- b. Isaiah makes it plain that it was the LORD who sends affliction upon His people (as a whole—not necessarily as individuals) because of sin:
- Isa 42:24: Who gave Jacob for plunder, and Israel to the robbers? Was it not the LORD, He against whom we have sinned? For they would not walk in His ways, Nor were they obedient to His law. Therefore He has poured on him the fury of His anger And the strength of battle;
 - When we have been living the way we have been living, we have no business to suppose that our troubles are anything other than God’s chastening hand.
 - He is doing this to call us to repentance.
- c. Brothers and sisters, it is bad for us to have God’s word and grace and righteousness so near to us in Jesus Christ and not receive it in faith...
- to have a feast spread by our Lord and to not take and eat...
 - that is why we are being chastened...
 - But it is even worse to be chastened for this and deny that we have been chastened!
 - to pretend that the LORD of heaven has nothing to do with it.
 - Sadly, this is often what God’s people do as Isaiah shows us at the end of verse 25:
 - Isa 42:25: It has set him on fire all around, Yet he did not know; And it burned him, Yet he did not take it to heart.
 - Fires of judgement were surrounding the nation,
 - but they ignored the Lord who sent it.
 - It is true that our chastisements are not nearly to the point that Israel’s came to when they were exiled...
 - God is very patient and He waits long before He judges.
 - But they are upon us, and if we would only be wise, we would turn before it gets worse!
 - As Isaiah said in the very first chapter, almost two centuries before the exile,
 - Isa 1:4-6: Alas, sinful nation, A people laden with iniquity, A brood of evildoers, Children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, They have provoked to anger The Holy One of Israel, They have turned away backward. Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, And the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head, There is no soundness in it, But wounds and

bruises and putrefying sores; They have not been closed or bound up, Or soothed with ointment.

- We desperately need to repent and return to the LORD.
 - There nothing to keep you away from Him!
 - As Isaiah also said in chapter 1,
 - Isa 1:18 "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword"; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.
 - His word is near,
 - His Son has come into the world bringing righteousness and grace and it is time for us to turn to receive Him...
 - to come to Him and feed upon Him for our salvation.

Conclusion:

Don't you see, there is a whole feast laid out before you.

- God's presents His Son to you in the gospel, crucified for sinners, full of life and salvation for all who will come to Him.
 - And the LORD is zealous to give this salvation to the nations!
 - His is zealous to make His people a blessing in all the earth, His servant, His messenger, His perfect one—
 - who spreads His truth all around.
- Here is a fountain of living water!
 - Here is the bread of God from heaven!
 - Here is the One who baptises with Holy Spirit!
 - Why will you be stricken any more, why be blind and deaf!
 - Come to Him and feast upon His fullness—and live!!!!
 - God's servant blind?!? hidden away?!?
 - God forbid!