

WHO IS THIS MAN?

A Christological Study in Four Parts

Class 4 — Servant of the Lord

The One Who Conquers by Bearing the World's Grief

Week Four — January 17, 2027

PRIMARY TEXTS

Old Testament: Isaiah 42:1–9; 49:1–7; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12

New Testament: Matthew 12:15–21; 27:11–14, 57–60; Luke 22:37; Acts 8:26–39; Romans 4:25; Philippians 2:5–11; 1 Peter 2:21–25

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Opening Prayer

O Lord Jesus Christ, faithful Servant of the Father, who didst not cry aloud in the streets nor break the bruised reed, yet who didst bear our griefs and carry our sorrows upon the tree of the cross: give us ears to hear Thy voice and hearts to receive Thy teaching. Grant that we who have studied Thy titles may now behold Thy suffering and know that by Thy stripes we are healed. Set our faces with Thine toward Jerusalem, that we may follow where Thou hast gone before. Keep us in the confession that we are counted righteous by no work of our own, but by Thy knowledge alone; who with the Father and the Holy Spirit livest and reignest, one God, now and forever. Amen.

I. Opening and Framing

The Title That Explains the Other Three

For three weeks this congregation has been collecting names. The Son of David established that Jesus holds a legal claim to a throne God swore to keep. The Son of Man established how far that claim reaches, and from whose hand the dominion comes. The Lamb of God established what happens at the altar, and how far back into Israel's worship the pattern of that altar goes. Each of those titles tells us something true, and each of them leaves one question standing: what was it like for the man who did it? Isaiah answers that question, and the answer is what makes the other three more than a set of impressive claims. The Servant of the Lord is the King reigning by obedience, the Son of Man receiving dominion by way of a grave, and the Lamb who is not led to the altar but walks to it, having listened every morning of His life for the word that sent Him there. Isaiah wrote this some seven hundred years before it happened. He describes the silence, the spitting, the verdict of innocence, the criminals on either side, and the wealthy man's tomb. He also gives the reason, and the reason is the only part of the chapter written in the first person plural.

Discussion Question

What does it mean that the one who saves us did so as a Servant, and that the wounds were ours before they were His?

1. The phrase “suffering servant” is familiar enough to have become a figure of speech. Say what you have understood it to mean, and whether you have ever heard Isaiah 53 read in a setting other than Good Friday. Does the chapter strike you first as a prediction, as a description, or as an accusation?

This session is both the last of the series and the first step of Lent. Everything the Passion narratives will describe, Isaiah has already written down.

Key Vocabulary

‘Eved (עֶבֶד): “servant.” Ranges from a chattel slave to a trusted royal official. Moses, Joshua, and David all carry the title servant of the Lord.

Pais (παῖς): the Greek word chosen for ‘eved in Isaiah 42:1, meaning both “servant” and “child.” The apostles use it of Jesus four times in Acts.

Limmudim (לְמוּדִים): “those who are taught,” disciples. The Servant's ear is opened morning by morning before His tongue is given anything to say.

’Asham (אָשָׁם): “guilt offering,” the Levitical reparation sacrifice of Leviticus 5:14–19. Isaiah 53:10 makes the Servant's life one.

Yatsdiq (יִצְדִּיק): “shall make many to be accounted righteous” (Isaiah 53:11), a courtroom verb meaning to acquit. Its opposite is to condemn.

Doulos (δούλος): “slave,” the form Christ took according to Philippians 2:7, and the ordinary Greek equivalent of the Hebrew ‘eved.

II. The Servant Introduced — Isaiah 42:1–9

God points at someone and says, “Behold.” The one He points at will not raise His voice.

Read Isaiah 42:1–9 aloud.

Isaiah 42:1 (ESV)

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.”

Isaiah 42:2–4 (ESV)

“He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.”

Isaiah 42:6 (ESV)

“I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations.”

Key Hebrew and Greek Terms:

‘Eved (עֶבֶד): “servant.” The range runs from a chattel slave with no autonomy to a royal official of the highest honor. Moses, Joshua, and David all bear the title ‘eved YHWH.

Pais (παῖς): the Greek word the Septuagint chose for ‘eved in this verse. It means both “servant” and “child,” and the apostolic preaching in Acts exploits both senses at once.

Bechiri (בְּחִירִי): “my chosen.” The vocabulary of covenant election, grounded in God’s unmerited favor rather than in any quality of the one chosen.

Mishpat (מִשְׁפָּט): “justice,” and in this context first of all a verdict, the decision a court hands down. It occurs three times in four verses.

Qaneh ratsuts (קֹנֶה רָצוּט) and pishtah kehah (פִּשְׁתָּה כְּהָה): “a bruised reed” and “a dim wick,” the two things the Servant will not finish off.

Isaiah 40 through 55 opens with a courtroom. God puts the gods of the nations on trial, and the verdict at the end of chapter 41 is that they are wind and emptiness. Chapter 42 begins with the

antidote: “Behold my servant.” The word Spirit in 42:1 is the same word translated wind in 41:29, set deliberately against it. The nation of Israel has already been called God’s servant in 41:8, which is what makes this passage the hinge of the whole section: the servant nation proves blind and deaf, and a Servant who hears perfectly steps into the office the nation could not hold.

2. God says three things about the Servant before He says anything about His work: I uphold Him, I have chosen Him, My soul delights in Him. The verb behind “delights” appears nowhere else in these sixteen chapters. Then comes the Spirit, and only then the mission. At the Baptism the Father says, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” using the Greek verb that renders this Hebrew one. What does the order tell us, that the delight comes before the work rather than after it?

3. The Servant is commissioned to bring justice to the nations, and He does it without raising His voice in the street. Nothing in the surrounding world established justice that way. Assyria established it with siege ramps and deportations, and Israel had once been sent to establish it by holy war. What is the text claiming about the kind of authority the Servant carries, and what does it demand of a congregation that would like God to act more forcefully in its own century?

4. A bruised reed is a walking stick already split, useless and one step from snapping. A dim wick is a flame that has burned down to smoke. In Isaiah those images belong to warfare: Egypt is a bruised reed, and the Egyptian army is snuffed out like a wick. Verse 4 then says the Servant Himself will not grow dim and will not be crushed, using the two same roots. How does the promise of what He will not do to the fragile depend on the promise of what will not be done to Him?

III. The Servant’s Own Voice — Isaiah 49 and Isaiah 50

In the middle two songs the Servant stops being described and starts speaking, and the first thing He says is that His work has failed.

Read Isaiah 49:1–7 and Isaiah 50:4–9 aloud.

Isaiah 49:4, 6 (ESV)

“But I said, ‘I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the Lord, and my recompense with my God.’ ... ‘It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.’”

Isaiah 50:4–5 (ESV)

“The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward.”

Isaiah 50:6–7 (ESV)

“I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. But the Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.”

Key Hebrew Terms:

Limmudim (לְמוּדִים): “those who are taught,” disciples. The Servant is a learner before He is a teacher, and the word is used twice in one verse, once of His tongue and once of His ear.

Natatti (נָתַתִּי): “I gave.” An active verb with the Servant as its subject, governing the back and the cheeks in Isaiah 50:6.

Chalamish (חֲלָמִישׁ): “flint,” the hardest stone named in Hebrew. The Servant sets His face like it.

Matsdiqi (מַצְדִּיקִי): “my vindicator,” the participle of the verb “to justify.” The Servant applies it to God as a legal title in 50:8, and the same verb returns in 53:11 with the Servant as its subject.

Historical Context

In the ancient Near East a man’s beard was the visible sign of his freedom and standing. When David’s envoys had half their beards shaved off by the Ammonites, they were ordered to stay in Jericho until the hair grew back rather than be seen in that condition (2 Samuel 10:4–5). Spitting in the face carried a formal legal weight: it appears in Numbers 12:14 as a father’s public shaming of a daughter and in Deuteronomy 25:9 as the sanctioned humiliation of a man who refuses his duty. What Isaiah 50:6 describes is not a brawl. It is a sequence of recognized rituals of public degradation, and the Servant offers Himself to each of them in turn.

The first song was spoken about the Servant. The second and third are spoken by Him. Between them they supply two things the first song left open: how far the mission reaches, and what it

will cost. The second song widens the horizon from Jacob to the ends of the earth; the third narrows it to a single back and a single face.

5. The Servant's first recorded words about His own ministry are a lament: I have labored for nothing. God's answer is not consolation but enlargement, that restoring Jacob is too light a task and the Servant will be a light to the nations. Simeon quotes this over an infant in the temple, and Paul and Barnabas quote it the day they turn toward the Gentiles. Why does God answer apparent failure by increasing the assignment, and what does that pattern train the Church to expect of her own labor?

6. In 49:3 God calls the Servant "Israel," and two verses later commissions Him to bring Israel back. The nation cannot be both the rescuer and the one needing rescue. Commentators have called the Servant "Israel reduced to One," the individual who bears the name because He alone does what the nation was named to do. How does this resolve the puzzle, and what does it mean for the Church that her identity is held in one Person rather than distributed among her members?

7. The Servant says God wakens His ear morning by morning to hear as those who are taught, and that from that hearing He has a tongue able to sustain the weary. He is a disciple before He is a teacher. Israel by contrast is described throughout Isaiah as having ears that cannot hear. What does it change about the words of Jesus to know that He describes Himself first as one who listens, and what does it suggest about the actual source of a teacher's authority?

8. In the Fourth Song the verbs go passive: He was pierced, He was crushed, He was taken away. Here in the Third Song the crucial verb is active and the Servant is its subject: I gave my back. He is not overtaken; He hands Himself over. The Church has long distinguished Christ's active obedience, His keeping of the Law in our place, from His passive obedience, His bearing of the penalty. Why does it matter that the Servant is the agent of His own surrender rather than the victim of someone else's violence?

IV. The Fourth Song — Isaiah 52:13–53:12

Five stanzas of three verses each. It begins in glory, descends into a grave, and comes back out.

Read Isaiah 52:13–53:12 aloud, and if possible read it in five parts by different voices.

Isaiah 52:13–15 (ESV)

"Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. As many were astonished at you — his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind — so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him."

Isaiah 53:4–6 (ESV)

“Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Isaiah 53:10–12 (ESV)

“Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days ... by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors.”

Key Hebrew Terms:

Rum, nasa', gavah (רָם, נָסָא, גָּבַהּ): “rise, be lifted up, be very high,” the three verbs of 52:13. Isaiah uses this combination of God alone: of Adonai in 6:1 and of the One who inhabits eternity in 57:15.

Nazah (נָזַח): “sprinkle” (52:15). The verb appears twenty-four times in the Old Testament, twenty-one of them in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, of blood or water applied by a priest.

Nasa' (נָסָא) and saval (סָוַל): “bore” and “carried” (53:4). The first is the verb used of the scapegoat bearing Israel’s iniquities away in Leviticus 16:22.

Hiphgia' (הִפְגִּיא'): “laid on” (53:6), causative of a verb meaning to strike or fall upon. God causes the blow of our iniquity to land on Him.

'Asham (אָשָׁם): “guilt offering” (53:10), the Levitical reparation sacrifice of Leviticus 5:14–19, requiring a ram and a restitution payment.

Yatsdiq (יָצַדִּיק): “shall make many to be accounted righteous” (53:11), the causative of the verb “to be righteous,” a courtroom word meaning to acquit.

The poem is built in five stanzas of exactly three verses: 52:13–15, then 53:1–3, 4–6, 7–9, and 10–12. The first and last are spoken by God; the three in between are spoken by a community confessing what it once thought and now knows. The structure encloses the humiliation inside the exaltation, so that the reader is told the outcome before he is shown the suffering. Two of its key words, sprinkle in 52:15 and guilt offering in 53:10, are priestly terms at home in Leviticus, which joins this session to the last one by the language of the text itself.

9. A. THE FRAME AND THE FACE. The song opens with three verbs, rise, be lifted up, be very high. Isaiah has used that vocabulary before, in chapter 6 of the Lord seated on a throne and in chapter 57 of the One who inhabits eternity. He now applies it to the Servant. What claim is being made about who the Servant is, and how does that claim change the two verses that follow, in which His appearance is marred beyond human likeness?

10. A. THE FRAME AND THE FACE. The whole account of the suffering sits inside a frame of glory: exaltation announced in 52:13, exaltation restated in 53:10–12. The reader is told the ending before he sees the cost. What does that arrangement do to the way the middle is read, and why might God have chosen to reveal the outcome first rather than let the suffering stand unexplained?

11. A. THE FRAME AND THE FACE. In 52:15 the Servant will sprinkle many nations, using a verb that belongs almost entirely to the priesthood, blood applied to an altar or to a people. The nations are unclean and cannot come near. Some modern translations read “startle” instead, on the strength of the Greek Old Testament. Given that the priest sprinkles and the sacrifice is sprinkled, what does it mean that the Servant does both?

12. A. THE FRAME AND THE FACE. The middle stanzas are a confession of a change of mind: “we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God,” and then, “but he was pierced for our transgressions.” The community reports its first reading of the man and then corrects it. Where in the Gospel accounts do we watch that same correction happen to particular people, and why does the text put the wrong estimate on record instead of skipping to the right one?

13. B. THE TRANSFER OF GUILT. Isaiah 53:4–6 says five times over that what fell on Him was ours: He bore our griefs, carried our sorrows, was pierced for our transgressions, was crushed for our iniquities, and the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all. The Hebrew preposition in verse 5 is causal, and the sense is that He was wounded on account of our transgressions. What is the difference between saying the cross shows us how much God loves us and saying that our sin is the reason those particular wounds exist?

14. B. THE TRANSFER OF GUILT. Verse 6 puts the diagnosis and the remedy in one sentence: all we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. The three uses of all are the point. Sin is described not as breaking rules but as turning, each of us in our own direction. Why is “his own way” a more searching description of sin than a list of offenses would be?

15. B. THE TRANSFER OF GUILT. Verse 10 says it was the will of the Lord to crush Him. This is the hardest sentence in the chapter, and it is the reason some object that the doctrine makes the Father cruel. The Nicene Creed confesses one substance shared by Father and Son, and Paul writes that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. How does the unity of God answer the charge, and how would you answer a member of this congregation who says the cross sounds like an angry Father punishing an innocent third party?

16. C. THE GUILT OFFERING AND THE SPOIL. The Servant's life is called an 'asham, the guilt offering of Leviticus 5, which required an unblemished ram and a restitution payment of the value plus a fifth. The offerer could not always identify what he had defiled; the sacrifice covered him anyway. Last week the class traced the Lamb of God. What does this word add that the Passover lamb and the Day of Atonement goat did not supply?

17. C. THE GUILT OFFERING AND THE SPOIL. After the Servant is cut off from the land of the living and buried, verse 10 says He will see offspring and prolong His days, and verse 11 says He will see and be satisfied. Those clauses come after the burial, not before it. What is being promised here, and how does the promise of offspring get fulfilled in people who were never born to Him by nature?

18. C. THE GUILT OFFERING AND THE SPOIL. The verb in 53:11 is a courtroom verb: He will make many to be accounted righteous. It means to acquit, and its opposite is to condemn. The Servant does not improve the many; He causes them to be declared righteous, and the ground of the declaration is that He bears their iniquities. What is the difference between a righteousness that is conferred and a righteousness that is achieved, and how would each one shape the way a person prays?

V. History Vindicates the Word — The Script Performed

Seven centuries later, men who were not trying to fulfill a prophecy fulfilled it line by line.

Read Isaiah 53:7–9 and Matthew 27:11–14, 57–60 aloud.

Isaiah 53:7, 9 (ESV)

“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. ... And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.”

Matthew 27:13–14 (ESV)

“Then Pilate said to him, ‘Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?’ But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.”

Matthew 27:57–60 (ESV)

“When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus ... and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock.”

Isaiah 53 supplies a series of specifics that no one arranging a legend would think to include, and each of them lands: silence under accusation, a verdict of innocence pronounced by the judge who condemns Him, a place among criminals, and a grave belonging to a wealthy man. The evangelists do not all pause to explain the connection. Matthew changes one word in his description of Joseph, calling him rich rather than a councillor, and leaves the reader to hear the echo.

19. Isaiah says the Servant opened not His mouth, and the Gospels report a silence so complete that Pilate marvels at it. Sufferers in the Old Testament do not behave this way: Job protests at length and Jeremiah argues with God. Silence in a courtroom is normally the behavior of a man with no defense. What is Jesus' silence actually saying, and to whom is it addressed?

20. The chapter reads like a list of coincidences that are difficult to arrange: numbered with transgressors, and He is crucified between two criminals; no violence and no deceit, and Pilate says three times that he finds no guilt in Him; a grave with the wicked and with a rich man, and a wealthy councillor gives up his own new tomb. What weight should such correspondences carry for a Christian's confidence, and what weight should they not be asked to carry?

VI. The Fulfillment — “About Whom Does the Prophet Say This?”

The longest quotation in Matthew, the oldest hymn in Paul, and a man in a chariot who asks the right question.

Read Matthew 12:15–21; Philippians 2:5–11; and Acts 8:26–39 aloud.

Matthew 12:18, 20–21 (ESV)

“Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. ... a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory; and in his name the Gentiles will hope.”

Philippians 2:6–8 (ESV)

“who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

Acts 8:34–35 (ESV)

“And the eunuch said to Philip, ‘About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?’ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.”

Key Greek Terms:

Doulos (δοῦλος): “slave.” The Greek that renders the Hebrew ‘eved in Philippians 2:7. It denotes a person owned entirely by another, with no autonomy of his own.

Ekenosen (ἐκένωσεν): “emptied himself.” The Confessions insist that He emptied Himself of the use of the divine majesty according to His human nature, not of the majesty itself.

Hyperypsosen (ὑπερύψωσεν): “highly exalted,” an intensified compound. The simple form is the Greek Old Testament’s rendering of the verbs in Isaiah 52:13.

Kyrios (κύριος): “Lord,” the Greek Old Testament’s substitute for the divine name. It is the name above every name at which every knee bows.

Matthew places the longest Old Testament quotation in his Gospel at the moment when Jesus withdraws from a plot to kill Him and goes on healing quietly. Paul, urging a quarrelsome congregation toward humility, reaches for a hymn that traces the whole descent and ascent. Luke records the first sermon anyone is known to have preached from Isaiah 53, delivered to one man on a desert road, and its outcome is a baptism.

21. Matthew has just described a plot to destroy Jesus. Jesus withdraws, keeps healing, and tells the healed to say nothing. To explain that retreat Matthew quotes seventy words of Isaiah against twenty-three words of narrative, the longest citation in his Gospel. What is Matthew arguing by spending so much of his text there, and why would a withdrawal need that much explanation?

22. The Greek Old Testament renders the Hebrew word for servant with a word that means both servant and child, and Matthew’s form of the quotation says “my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased,” which is what the voice said at the Jordan. The apostles then call Jesus God’s pais four times in Acts. How does the double sense hold together two things a hearer might think must be chosen between, that this is a slave and that this is the Son?

23. The hymn in Philippians moves down and then up: the form of God, the form of a slave, obedience to the point of death on a cross, and then a name above every name. The Fourth Servant Song moves the same way, exaltation to humiliation to exaltation. Paul then applies to Jesus a sentence God speaks in Isaiah 45 about bowing to Himself alone. Why is it a mistake to treat the hymn only as a lesson in humility, and what is the pastoral reason Paul gives it to this congregation?

24. Paul says Christ emptied Himself. The Formula of Concord insists that He did not lay aside the divine nature or its attributes; He refrained from the full and public use of the majesty that was always His according to His human nature, showing it when He chose. Why does the

distinction matter, and what would be lost if we said instead that God stopped being God for a while?

25. The Ethiopian is a Gentile, a court official, and a eunuch, which barred him under Deuteronomy 23:1 from the assembly. He is reading a scroll about a man deprived of justice and cut off. His question, “About whom does the prophet say this?” is the honest question of a man who cannot tell. Philip answers by telling him about Jesus, and the man asks to be baptized before the chariot reaches the next town. Why does preaching this chapter lead so directly to water?

26. The whole series has been a set of answers to one question, “Who is this man?” The Son of David tells you He is the King. The Son of Man tells you how far His reign extends. The Lamb of God tells you what is on the altar. The Servant of the Lord tells you that the one on the altar walked there Himself, hearing and obeying, and that the wounds were for your transgressions and not for His own. If that last title is true, then the answer to who He is turns out to be inseparable from whose He is and for whom He suffered. What changes on the Sunday after this study, in the way you hear the reading of the Passion, when you know the whole thing was spoken seven centuries before it happened and that it was spoken about you?

Synthesis and Closing

Text	Contribution to Session Theme	Key Term
Isaiah 42:1–9	God points to a chosen, Spirit-anointed Servant who brings a verdict to the nations without raising His voice and without finishing off the fragile.	Mishpat
Isaiah 49:1–7	The Servant is called from the womb, laments an apparently fruitless labor, and is answered by an enlarged commission to the ends of the earth.	’Or goyim
Isaiah 50:4–9	He hears as a disciple morning by morning, hands over His own back and cheeks, and sets His face like flint toward the shame.	Limmudim
Isaiah 52:13–53:12	Glory encloses humiliation: the sinless One is pierced for our transgressions, made a guilt offering, and acquits the many He bore.	’Asham

Matthew 12:15–21	The withdrawal from a plot to kill Him is explained by the longest quotation in the Gospel: this is the gentle Servant of Isaiah 42.	Pais
Philippians 2:5–11	The descent from the form of God to a slave's death and the ascent to the name above every name follow the Fourth Song's own shape.	Doulos
Acts 8:26–35	The first recorded sermon on Isaiah 53 is preached to one man in a chariot, and it ends in a baptism.	Euangelizomai

Series Conclusion

Four weeks ago this congregation began with a promise made to a shepherd who wanted to build God a house, and was told instead that God would build him one. Since then the study has followed four names. The Son of David gave us a King with a legal claim to a real throne, promised in an oath that survived the loss of the throne itself. The Son of Man gave us the extent of that King's reign, a dominion received in a heavenly courtroom and stretching to every nation and every century. The Lamb of God gave us the altar, and showed that the mechanism of salvation was set out in Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus long before anyone knew its purpose. The Servant of the Lord now gives us the person standing at that altar, and tells us that He came to it hearing, willing, and silent, and that the wounds He received there were owed by us. The four titles are not four subjects. They are one man, and Isaiah 53 is the place in the Old Testament where all four converge: a royal figure, exalted with the verbs reserved for God, offered as a sacrifice, bearing the iniquity of us all. In the weeks ahead the congregation will walk with Him to Jerusalem. Nothing that happens there will be a surprise, and nothing that happens there will be an accident.

27. Isaiah 53 was written roughly seven hundred years before the events it describes, and the community speaking in its middle stanzas confesses that it had the man wrong before it had him right. Having now heard the chapter as a whole, what have you had wrong about Jesus that this study has corrected, and what will you do with the correction?

28. The Servant justifies the many by bearing their iniquities, which means the righteousness you will be given is not yours and never becomes a possession you can inspect. What is difficult about receiving a righteousness you cannot see in yourself, and what does the Church give you, week by week, to hold on to instead?

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, faithful Servant of the Father: You heard morning by morning and did not turn back; You gave Your back to the strikers and did not hide Your face; You were pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities, and by Your wounds we are healed. We thank You that You have made many to be accounted righteous, and that we are among them by no merit of our own. Keep us in that righteousness as we follow You through Lent to the cross and the empty tomb, and bring us at the last to see You high and lifted up, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

Appendix: Liturgical, Lectionary, and Hymnic Connections

Liturgical Connections

The Servant Songs are woven through Holy Week more thoroughly than any other Old Testament material. Isaiah 50:4–9 is appointed for Palm Sunday, the Sunday of the Passion, so that the crowd’s shouting and the Servant’s given back are heard on the same morning. Isaiah 52:13—53:12 is the Old Testament reading for Good Friday in both the one-year and the three-year lectionaries, read while the church is stripped and the crucifix is the only thing left in view. Isaiah 42:1–9 is read at the Baptism of Our Lord in Series A, which sets the Father’s “in whom my soul delights” beside the voice from heaven, and Isaiah 49:1–7 appears on the Second Sunday after the Epiphany in Series A. The Nunc Dimittis, sung after the distribution in the Divine Service, quotes Isaiah 49:6 directly: “a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.” The congregation therefore sings the Second Servant Song every time it leaves the rail.

Lectionary Connections

Beyond Holy Week, Matthew 12:15–21 is not itself an appointed Gospel, but its source text governs the Baptism of Our Lord. Acts 8:26–40 is the First Reading for the Fifth Sunday of Easter in Series B. Philippians 2:5–11 is the Epistle for Palm Sunday in all three years and appears again on Proper 21 in Series A, and its opening line, “Let this mind be in you,” gives the season its ethical direction without ever detaching the command from the descent that grounds it. Isaiah 53 also stands behind the Passion history read in midweek Lenten services in many congregations, where the four evangelists’ accounts are harmonized and read in sequence.

Hymnic Connections

LSB 451: “Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted” — Thomas Kelly, 1804. The title is taken directly from Isaiah 53:4, and the hymn is among the most exact versifications of the Fourth Song in English.

LSB 438: “A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth” — Paul Gerhardt on Isaiah 53:7 and John 1:29 together; stanza five marks the door with the blood of the Passover.

LSB 449: “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded” — the marred face of Isaiah 52:14 and the man of sorrows of 53:2–3, set to the melody Bach used five times in the St. Matthew Passion.

LSB 420: “Christ, the Life of All the Living” — Ernst Homburg’s hymn on the stripes, the bonds, and the substitution: “Thou hast borne the smiting only that my wounds might all be whole.”

LSB 530: “No Temple Now, No Gift of Price” — a modern hymn on the once-for-all offering that ends the sacrifices, suitable for closing a series that began with a promised house.

This session concludes the series. The Pre-Lenten Sundays that follow turn from the question of who Jesus is to the life of those who belong to Him: Septuagesima on grace rather than wages, Sexagesima on the sown Word, and Quinquagesima on the road to Jerusalem, where Jesus tells the Twelve that everything written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished, and they do not understand a word of it. That reading is the hinge between this series and Lent.