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“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,” John 12:21.
“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,” Mark 9:24.

ISAIAH 49

¹Listen to me, you coastlands. Pay attention, you faraway peoples! The LORD called me from the womb. When I was inside my mother, he mentioned my name. ²He made my mouth like a sharpened sword. He hid me in the shadow of his hand. He made me a polished arrow. He concealed me in his quiver. ³He said to me, “You are my servant Israel, in whom I will display my glory.” ⁴But I said to myself, “I have labored in vain. I spent my strength and came up empty, with nothing. Yet a just verdict for me rests with the LORD, and my reward is with my God.” ⁵But now the LORD, who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to turn Jacob back to him, so that Israel might be gathered to him, so that I will be honored in the eyes of the LORD, because my God has been my strength—⁶the LORD said: It is too small a thing that you should just be my servant to raise up only the tribes of Jacob and to restore the ones I have preserved in Israel, so I will appoint you to be a light for the nations, so that my salvation will be known to the end of the earth.



There was once a businessman in India, a wealthy trader by the sea, who had a very large house with many, many rooms—and two sons. And since he did not know how to decide who would receive this house as his inheritance, he set up a test for his two sons. He would give each of them a set number of rupees, and whoever could fill the rooms of his house more would inherit the whole thing.

So the older son bought furniture, carpet, and bulky things that would inhabit the room space. He bought tapestries and rugs that would cover as much as possible. But in the end the older son could only fill several rooms. The younger son decided to use the rupees to buy ... light. He bought candles and lanterns to “fill” the rooms with light. Because the younger son was clever in spending the rupees, he could fill each and every room. He was rewarded with the whole house as his inheritance.

It is important how we view light—the way by which we see. When we attempt to see by the dimness of this world, we make small discoveries that never satisfy.

So we must be wise in the way that we view Jesus. Compared to this world’s reason, a vast darkness ... Jesus is a bright sun of revelation, an Epiphany, the manifesting of God’s Son, and a witness we bear to the world.

Jesus Is a Light Greater Than You Know

1. *Light that fills life's spaces*
2. *Light that takes you places*

Isaiah chapter 49 begins a new portion of Isaiah dedicated to the Savior. There are three servant songs very close together here, songs about our suffering Savior, and how he will come to pay for the wrongs of Israel. Jesus became what Israel should have been. His was the life of perfection. The text explains when it says, "*You are my servant, Israel.*" it is God explaining Jesus' work, to do what Israel was supposed to do. "*You are my servant, you are now Israel.*" It was time for the substitute to carry the team, a special arrow polished and ready in the quiver, a sharpened sword hidden in the sleeves of the Almighty. The Servant is God's secret weapon. The Servant was born for this. His mission was clear from the beginning. It must have been so miraculous when the baby Savior took form in the virgin womb. It was there, our text says, that God called him and made mention of the name of salvation.

We have also failed. As humans who must live up to God's moral code we do not complete him. We cannot be better. I was getting my hair cut when the stylist was talking about bringing out the good in everybody. No, there is no good in us, as stillborn sinners. We are God's chosen creature on earth and we have empty spaces in our lives which have no light. There is a great distance between God and sinners. This distance is filled with sin—intentional, unintentional, internal.

But God used his secret weapon. Sharpened sword, polished arrow, Christ kicked our sins out of the picture. Powerful in word, Isaiah 11:4b, He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Jesus is our secret weapon. His promises fill our lives like light. There's a promise for every problem. When crushed by the law, light the room with Jesus. He puts back the pieces. When facing a problem, light the room with Jesus, "I will be with you." When tempted by the devil, light the room with Jesus. He has greater happiness for you. When accused by the devil, light the room with Jesus, "You are innocent by my declaration." When facing the threats of the future—Light the room with Jesus. "I have suffered every consequence." When feeling worried or depressed about a relationship—Light the room with Jesus. He is your most perfect relationship. As vast as our troubles may seem, our troubles are all cut-outs fit just for Jesus. He fills every corner of trouble. He fills every room.

There may be those among us today who have found Jesus a little too large to imagine, a little too big, a little too unbelievable. Is that why you have a hard time with life? Is it because Jesus fits everything a little too easily, like some band-aid you've tried to stick to broken bones and aching hearts? The light may seem difficult to believe. But consider: If there was a God, wouldn't he have to be complicated? Wouldn't the answers be as simple as light, but also just as complex when viewed under the scope of science? Aren't you tired of looking for all the questions and find, instead, the Answer to them all?

People once thought it was impossible to fly, and then there were a pair of brothers who had a Wright answer to that question. People once thought it was impossible to travel faster than 20 mph, and then they powered locomotives with steam. People once thought it was impossible to share information more quickly than paper and ink, and now we live in a world of electronic information. Isn't it ironic that we gain information with electronic light, and listen to invisible speakers on the radio, and yet people are supposedly reasonable when they laugh at the world of invisible angels, demons, devil, and God in the Bible?

One day we will look back and say, "People once thought it was impossible that an unimpressive man, who was also true God, rescued a world of sinners." We will laugh as Abraham laughed in happiness that he would have a son and as the One Enthroned in Heaven laughs in Psalm 2 as the nations gather against him.

Trans: Jesus' light does more than fill our lives, but is great enough to fill the world. Indian story continued: the older son became a fisherman, and in the good times he would look back at the coast where his younger brother lived, and cursed it. But in the darkest storms he would also look back at the coast and see the lights flickering in every room. So the older brother was able to make his way back to shore. In the same way, believers in Jesus Christ are beacons of light to bring home the wayward. For Jesus is a ...

2. Light that takes you places

A remarkable fact about this Old Testament text is how it is not spoken specifically to Israelites living in Israel. It is spoken to coastlands and distant peoples: it implies Old Testament mission work. This may go unnoticed sometimes, but there were Old Testament missionaries. Elijah went to Sidon; Jonah went to Nineveh; Elisha witnessed to Naaman. Abraham and his offspring were always promised to be a blessing to every nation.

Jesus' work seemed in vain, apparently a failed ministry, apparently a small thing. He preached sermons that turn people away. He had disciples that just don't get it. The people of his generation demanded a sign. Perjurers were plotting his death. He died a death that seemed so unequivocally final. Yet the servant in this song says, "What is due me is in the LORD's hand." "What was due" him was the reward from God the Father. The reward was rising from the dead. What was small is now great and glorious and honorable. So this text is sometimes called the Great Exchange of the OT.

Our work may seem in vain at times. Yet Jesus still is risen and death is still defeated. God's reward is waiting for our labors: the resurrection from the dead; vindication from God's demands; justification from the work of Jesus.

Because of that, the Light takes us places. Missionaries in foreign places. Rubbing shoulders with those who do not know Jesus. Getting your hair cut? Light the room with Jesus. Searching in the aisle of the grocery store—Light the room with Jesus. Visiting the dog park—Light the room with Jesus.

I can see Jesus in my mind's eye praying to the Father using these words first written in Isaiah: It's one of those times when Jesus sneaks away from all the crowds, a time when he's alone with no one to bother him, a time of distress and humiliation. He kneels down and prays words written long before they fall from his human lips: "*I have labored to no purpose, in vain, for nothing.*" His heart beats, pulsing with the gospel. "*You are my servant, you are Israel,*" replies the Father. Jesus' heart beats again, rippling through all the known world. "*It is too small a thing to bring back only Israel,*" the Father continues. The gospel heart keeps beating throughout his death and resurrection into the book of Acts and his ascension, the letters of Paul and John and Peter and James, concentric circles from one part of the world to the other, known or unknown. "*I will also make you a light for the Gentiles.*" The heart of the Savior keeps beating and beating and pounding and pumping every time we spread his message, every time our hearts hurt for our unbelieving friends, every missionary who prays fervently that his work would not be in vain, every offering we drop in the plate, because Jesus is just that great, the Light that goes into all the world. Amen.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.