

# His Humility; Our Hope

Isaiah 42:1-4 • 2022-04-10



I'm guessing many of you have seen at least part of the Star Wars movies or tv shows. They involve a group of rebels who are battling against a corrupt Empire that is trying to take over the whole galaxy. One recurring phrase comes up which is used by the rulers and advocates of the Empire. "We will bring order to the galaxy." But the viewer knows that this phrase is just used as a coverup for evil. For the sake of order, the inter-galactic Empire crushes the poor, overlooks the downtrodden, and crushes all who might oppose it. The Empire's admirals and officers commit terrible atrocities all for the sake of establishing order. "We will bring order to the galaxy." It sounds good on the surface. Who doesn't want good order? But by order they really mean absolute and terrifying power and control over everyone.

Most recognize that this series is actually modeled off the propaganda of modern warfare. The Empire is clearly based on the Axis powers of World War II and the rebels are clearly modeled after the Allies and the underground resistance in Europe. And the struggle for power continues around the world. Still today wars are waged in the name of establishing order and gaining absolute control over everything. But a world ordered by corrupt mankind will never be what we truly want. This world needs something better!

Today we'll see how all people of all nations can put their hope in something greater than any political alliance or military might. Surprisingly our hope is actually centered in just the opposite of overpowering might. It is found in the deepest humility and from someone who set aside all his power and authority. This Palm Sunday we'll look at Isaiah 42 and see how Jesus' humility is our hope, and the hope of all people.

Isaiah 42 begins with the Lord pointing out the one who will bring true order and peace to the galaxy. The title the Lord gives him here isn't "supreme admiral" or "commander." He is called "my servant" and "my chosen one." Chosen one is a title that carries some of the same connotations as the title Messiah. God selected this man alone to be the one to carry out his purposes. And this man isn't out for personal gain. He is chosen to serve the Lord's plans. And the Lord doesn't say that this man won't be armed with guided missiles, warships, or modern armies. He is equipped for his work with something far greater. The Lord says, "I will put my Spirit on him." This servant, Jesus, was chosen by the Father. God sent his Son. At his baptism God the Father declared, "This is my Son in whom I delight." He anointed him with the Holy Spirit who came down in visible form. Jesus, the Son of God who was born and took on human flesh. Jesus was chosen for God's plan to bring order and peace to all the world.

The phrase used here isn't exactly, "He will bring order to the galaxy." But it is a very similar expression, "He will bring justice to the nations." There's no doubt that the nations need justice! You can hear it on the news all the time. There are parts of the world where people are crying for justice as troops invade their homes and attack their cities. There are parts of the world where genocide and infanticide are taking place on a large scale. There are parts of the world where the poor are oppressed and the powerful act as if they are above the law.

And this is nothing new! There has always been a lack of justice for the nations. Where was justice when the land of Israel was taken over by the Greeks, the Persians, and the Romans? Where was justice during the world wars? Where was justice when there were massacres taking place of the native people of so many parts of our nation? Where was justice when men, women, and children were sold by their African countrymen and then bought and brought to this land to be branded and treated as possessions and property?

And you don't have to dig far away or far into the past to wonder about justice. Where was justice when there were riots taking place during the pandemic? Where was justice when so many lives were ruined all for the sake of "establishing order" as dissenting people lost their jobs? We can't agree on how to handle the divide between rich and poor. We can't agree on basic justice for men, women, children, and the unborn!

And dare we think that the lack of justice happens only on the big stage? Your friend, your neighbor, perhaps your own household has dealt with the crushing pain of sin and abuse. Life is smothered out when a mother abandons her own helpless child. Where is justice when the father abandons his wife and children? Where is justice when the young child is physically or emotionally abused by the very parent or guardian who should be protecting them? Where is justice when young men and women who haven't even reached puberty are being fooled into life-altering hormone treatment and surgery -one which many of them will later deeply regret? We can't even agree on how to stop abuse!

And though we may be quick to deal out justice for all, how would we do it? Would you dispense justice on all evildoers? Perhaps then you might wish to conveniently ignore all your own failures and faults. There's a recent novel series by a best-selling author that depicts a world filled with superheroes. But his novel is more accurate than other superhero novels. Everyone with superpowers is corrupt and selfish. Another famous author presented his most powerful heroine with the option of seizing an all-powerful ring. She could have ruled the world with it. But she had to

turn down the tempting offer. She knew she too would end up turning to evil if she had such powerful authority. Would you and I really do any better if we were chosen to bring order? I'm afraid to answer that.

But God has chosen the one who can bring justice to the nations. Our hope isn't found in his great display of strength. Our hope is found in his great humility. Listen to how the Lord described the Messiah: *"He will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth."*

When Jesus came, he didn't come asserting himself. He came in such humility that the first time you hear of his authority is when the angels tell his mother that her son will take the throne of David. Distant travelers then announced his birth to a puzzled king Herod, "Where is the one born King?" No one knew. He was in a humble home in Bethlehem. And when he began his ministry there was a man dressed in camel's hair calling out the way before him. Even as he began his work, he didn't say a word, but the Father from heaven declared, "This is my Son!" During his ministry he taught the people with gentleness and truth. Even as he healed them and performed miracles it wasn't to gain power. He told people not to tell others about it. He did not boast. He was a humble man carrying out the Lord's assignment. He didn't have to shout out on Palm Sunday. The crowds did it for him, praising a humble king.

The description of his work is filled with gentleness and love. When Jesus saw someone who was broken by sin, "a bruised reed," he didn't take the most practical move and say, "You're out of the kingdom." Instead, he spent time with them. He taught them. He healed them. When the crowds dragged the guilty adulterers before Jesus, he did not call for her stoning. He offered forgiveness and spoke of new life. When tax collectors shunned by the crowds appeared, Jesus welcomed them. When his own disciples broke down in tears after they had failed him, he didn't punish them. He forgave them. He didn't overlook the poor and needy but proclaimed the good news to them "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." He told the good news of eternal life even for the poor and outcast. Recall the story of the poor man, Lazarus, who at death was carried to paradise. When those burdened by the weight of sin came to him with their heavy loads, he didn't pile up more for them to carry. On the contrary, he said, "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened. I will give you rest... for your souls." The crowds that cheered him as he entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday didn't see a military commander. They saw a servant of the Lord bringing them hope and peace. Even the poor criminal who hung next to him on the cross could plead, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom." Then he heard Jesus say, "Today, you will be with me in paradise."

And Jesus doesn't just talk big about peace. The first part of Isaiah 42:4 is actually a play on words. It uses the same words from above: "bruised and smoldering." Jesus does not smolder the faith of the weak or crush those torn and broken by sin. And *he himself* will not fade and will not be broken. Jesus would not falter or fail in his mission.

As he rode up to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, he knew that in order to bring justice, he had to pay the price. Make no mistake. God does not establish justice by ignoring evil. He would deal with it. He would bring justice as he paid the price for the evil empires of the past. He would pay the evil for the atrocities of today. He would pay the evil for the horrible neglect and abuse and injustice of our land. He would pay the price for all the justice that you and I ought to have coming on our own heads. And this is our hope: he humbled himself to take the price for all sin. He suffered the price and took it upon himself. So that God could be both just and the one who justifies he sent his Son to be an offering for sin. This is our hope!

And our hope is not dead. In a sense Jesus was crushed and snuffed out. He did die on the cross. But as the prophecy of Isaiah says, "a bruised reed he will not break, a smoldering wick he will not snuff out." Jesus did not end his mission in death. He brought justice and rose again in victory over the grave. Not even death would snuff him out. And when he brings justice and peace it will mean no more sin, no more curse, no more death.

That is our hope. And it is the hope of everyone who feels like a smoldering wick. Jesus' humility and his victory is the hope of the family with a broken marriage, with abuse, and with neglect. It is the hope of the people in distant nations who suffer injustice today. It is the hope of all those in the past who by the working of the gospel longed for a better country. They longed for the peace brought by the world's Messiah. As Isaiah prophesied *"In his teaching the islands will put their hope."* He is the solution to all the disorder, decay, and evil in this world. By his humility we are restored.

The justice we long for is when God will make everything right. He will deal with sin in mercy for all who put their hope in him. He will answer every longing heart with the promise *"Behold, I am making everything new."* (Re 21:5)

Can you picture order in the galaxy? Not order brought by a wicked tyrant who tramples the downtrodden. Not the kind of order that involves a power-hungry control over all others. But justice from the Lord who sets aside all his power in order to save. Mercy from the Lord who promises to restore all things to make life not only better, but perfect and holy forever. Love from the Lord who humbled himself to be our hope.