

Dear Members of St. Andrew's Uniting Church, Friends and Adherents,

Grace, Peace and blessing to you all in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

As we enjoy this summer good weather with a cooler temperature than the usual, we should be grateful to God for the blessings He provides to us and for some of us good time away with interstate or overseas trips, to spend time with friends and family. While some have returned, we have few others still enjoying their trip away.

Sadly, it has been the 32<sup>nd</sup> day that Artsakh and its 120,00 Armenian inhabitants have been under siege and the only access road to Armenia has been blocked under strange pretences. The world has been seeing or reading only sporadic and partial news pieces about this catastrophic situation that is worsening day by day. As the blockade continues, challenges are increasing, including but not limited to, an acute shortage of food, medicine and basic necessities, plus internet, gas and electricity shut-offs. Despite operating under these adverse conditions, the AMAA has been able to open its Kindergartens and "Shogh" Centres and resumed activities after the Christmas holidays on Monday, January 9. It is our hope that the children are provided a moment of respite with their classmates as they learn and play with each other under the nurturing care of their teachers.

May God protect our people and precious children in Artsakh and grant them an everlasting peace. Please continue to pray for the dire situation.

Here at St. Andrew's, these first few weeks of the New Year are quiet time for us, and all our weekly activities are on break and our regular programs will resume on the first week of February. Please check the Notices as well as Newsletter for dates and times.

If you will not be able to join us for worship tomorrow, please light a candle and worship with us from home following the attached Order of Christmas Service.

Be safe and well, continue to pray, remembering those who need care, support and love and let me know if any member of the congregation that you know of needs our help and prayers.

Here are some prayer points for this week:

1. Pray for the New Year to be a good year for all and ask God to be with us, as He was in the past.
2. Pray for the people of Artsakh, men, women, young, old and children, as they face humanitarian crisis with the blockade continuing for the 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive week by Azerbaijan, while the International Community keeps silent, including the Australia and the sadly the Uniting Church in Australia.
3. Pray for the poor, the sick, the vulnerable, the struggling and the stressed.
4. Pray for those who are unwell and struggling with different kinds of medical issues.
5. Pray for world peace and ask for God's blessings.

Please let me know if you or anyone else has prayer points.

Best Regards,

Krikor

**The Servant of the Lord  
Son of God and His Mission**

*Isaiah 49:1-6*

Last Sunday we said that there are 5 "*Servant Songs*" that speak about Jesus and the aspects of His ministry. We've looked at the first one, in Isaiah 42:1-9.

We said that Christ didn't come to knock over people, but He came to serve, to reinforce, and to strengthen. He came to give us strength in the person of the Holy Spirit so that we have the ability to serve Him and be witnesses for Him.

Considering the text Isaiah 49:1-7, today we will look at the Mission of the Servant.

**A. First we should see that this passage of Scripture is prophetically speaking about Christ.**

1. Verse 1 says He was called before He was born.

We should realise that Isaiah couldn't say this about himself; because his call took place when he was an adult. But Christ was so called before He was born.

In Luke 1:31-33, the angel tells Mary: "*You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end*".

2. Verse 2 tells us His mouth is like a sharpened sword.

In Hebrews 4:12 we read: "*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart*".

The powerful words of Christ drew people to Him, not His looks or glamor. If we read the Gospels carefully, we find many examples.

Simon Peter answered him: "*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God*". (John 6:68-69)

The disciples, on the Emmaus Road said: "*Were not our hearts burn within us while He was speaking to us*". (Luke 24:32)

The woman at the well said: "*Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?*" (John 4:29)

3. Verse 3 says: "*You are My Servant, Israel, in Whom I will display My splendour*".

This can't be about the nation of Israel, because in verse 5, the Servant is called to bring Israel back to God.

The word Israel literally means, "*He Who will rule as God*".

Christ said, in John 17: 4, "*I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.*"

Christ obviously displayed God's splendour to a lost and hurting world.

4. Verse 4 tells us that this Servant said: "*I have laboured to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing*". (Isaiah 49:4)

You may say that this doesn't refer to Christ.

During Christ's 3-year public ministry He touched the lives of so many people. But where were all those at the end. We read in Luke 13:34: "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing*".

Jesus was heartbroken at the end after so much effort. He did see some results after His Ascension when at Pentecost, many people came to Him.

5. Verse 5 tells us that this Servant came to bring the Israelite people back to God.

Christ came to minister to the Jews. Many of His earliest converts were Jews.

In Isaiah 11 we see a prophecy about the coming of the Messiah, we read: "*A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from His roots a Branch will bear fruit.*"

Then, Isaiah 11:12 tell us: "*He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; He will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth*".

In Matthew 15:24, Jesus says: "*I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.*"

6. Verse 6 tells us that the Servant serves as a light to the Gentiles.

When Jesus was a little baby, Simeon took Him into his arms and said: "*Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel*". (Luke 2:29-32).

Jesus Himself said: "*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*" (John 8:12)

7. Verse 6 also tells us that the Servant will bring salvation to the ends of the earth.

Jesus tells His disciples: "*You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*" (Acts 1:8)

In the Great Commission of the New Testament, Jesus says: "*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations*". (Matt 28:19)

These descriptions fit well to Jesus.

### **B. Secondly, this does not only refer to Him but to His mission.**

In the first Servant Song, we got a hint for the mission of Christ. There God said: "*Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight.*" (Isaiah 42:1)

Now we see the mission of Christ expressed in detail.

The people of Israel, the Chosen People, had lost their way. God had made a covenant with them, but they had not kept their part of the bargain and wandered away. They were without hope because they have forsaken God and have gone after other gods. They had been dispersed and crushed by foreign powers. But Jesus came to restore them back to a right relationship with God. He came to bring physical and spiritual healing. Paul tells us, in Romans 5:11: "*We ... rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation*". (Romans 5:11)

Christ also came to Serve all mankind. He said: "*The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*" (Matt 20:28)

He reached out to the Samaritan woman at the well, to Greeks and to all those who asked for His help.

In today's terms "Red and yellow, black and white".

### **C. This is not only Christ's mission, but it is our mission as well.**

Christ's mission didn't end when He died on the cross. He did His part and with His death He purchased our salvation and paid the penalty of our sins. He has put forth His mission upon us.

When we accept Christ as our Saviour, we accept His mission as well; we become His missionaries until Christ comes again. We have work to do!

To do His mission is not easy. When we decide to follow His example, it means that we are taking the risk of being persecuted and tortured.

We should do our part faithfully and we will get our rewards.

Sometimes we think that we are not successful in our ministry when we focus on numbers. We see some churches have large numbers of people attending the services, and big congregations. As we look to our church, we feel that we are not doing well. In fact, Christ rarely preached to large groups except the 5000. His main ministry lay with a core group of people, reaching out and touching lives one by one.

Our mission is still the same, reaching to the lost. It is not about numbers. It is about quality, but most of all, about commitment. Here, at S. Andrew's we are a small group of people, but dedicated, committed, and vowed to do our best for as long as we can.

If we win one, we will be doing what the Lord has asked us to do. And we have done that. We have people joining our services and enjoying the worship. Also, we have people joining the congregation as new members.

As long as we keep doing what we ought to do, we keep on going with our mission, the mission of the Servant of God.

Amen!