



# Jesus Fulfilled What Isaiah Spoke

## Ten Reasons to Hope In Jesus

**Scripture:** Matthew 12:15-21

**Sermon Series:** Matthew

**Topic:** Jesus, Fulfillment, Prophecy

### Matthew 12:15-21 (ESV<sup>1</sup>)

<sup>15</sup> Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all <sup>16</sup> and ordered them not to make him known. <sup>17</sup> This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

<sup>18</sup> "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.

<sup>19</sup> He will not quarrel or cry aloud,  
nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets;

<sup>20</sup> a bruised reed he will not break,  
and a smoldering wick he will not quench,  
until he brings justice to victory;

<sup>21</sup> and in his name the Gentiles will hope."

## Introduction

Our text this morning makes a connection between the words and work of Jesus and words of Isaiah, which he spoke about the messiah. Matthew and Isaiah will conspire to offer nine reasons to hope in Jesus.

The opposition to Jesus' ministry and teaching continues to mount higher and higher. Last week we looked at the first fourteen verses of chapter twelve. In them, Jesus said and did some things that utterly provoked and maddeningly infuriated the Pharisees. Jesus claimed...

- ...to know better than the Pharisees the God's heart regarding both the Sabbath and people in need.
- ...to be a more accurate Biblical interpreter of Scripture than the Pharisees.

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<sup>1</sup> English Standard Version, Crossway Publishers, Wheaton, IL.

- ...to be greater than the temple.
- ...for himself the title, "Son of Man."
- Finally, he contradicted the Pharisees and claimed that it was "*lawful to do good on the Sabbath*" (12:12). He demonstrated God's blessing upon this understanding of the law by healing a man in the synagogue on the Sabbath.

The Pharisees responded by "*conspiring to destroy*" Jesus (v.14). Matthew does not tell us with whom the Pharisees conspired to destroy Jesus, but Mark does. They conspired with the **Herodians**<sup>2</sup> (Mk 3:6). This is the first time in Matthew's gospel where the hatred of Jesus by the Pharisees has risen to level of them actively making plans to murder him.

In the next paragraph, the paragraph before us this morning (vs. 15-21), Matthew relates Jesus' response to this conspiracy and how he understands that response to be evidence pointing to Jesus being God's Messiah.

## Jesus Withdrew

Matthew describes Jesus' response to this new threat level of the hatred of the Pharisees.

**Matthew 12:15-16** (ESV) <sup>15</sup> Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all <sup>16</sup> and ordered them not to make him known.

Jesus somehow became aware of this conspiracy between the Pharisees and the Herodians to destroy him. He responded by "*withdrawing from there*." Mark tells us that Jesus left town and went "*to the sea*"<sup>3</sup> of Galilee.

Hmm. This is interesting.

Why did you withdraw Jesus? You were in the right. It was good to heal a man on the Sabbath. It is true, you are the Lord of the Sabbath. Why not use your power to put those hypocritical Pharisee right. Why not give them what for! What withdraw? Why? The kingdom is advancing, so why not keep it moving? You have the greater momentum, so why not keep it going? Everyone knows you were right. Everyone in that synagogue who saw you heal that man knew that it was good and right for you to do so. The Pharisees were shown to be the selfish, evil hypocrites that they truly are. Why withdraw?

*Many followed him.* Jesus could go nowhere alone. The "*many*" who followed him are described by Mark as being "*a great crowd... from Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon*" (Mk 3:7).

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<sup>2</sup> The Herodians were "supporters and associates of Herod Antipas of Galilee and the Herodian family dynasty" *ESV Study Bible* note at Mark 3:16.

<sup>3</sup> Mark 3:7.

This encompasses a large crowd from quite a wide *geographic* area. This scene takes place on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. The regions of *Idumea* in the south (beyond the Decapolis) and *Tyre* and *Sidon* in the north are predominantly Gentile regions. So this crowd of “*many*” who are following Jesus is comprised of *both Jews and Gentiles*. Jesus’ popularity has transcended Israel alone and has spread into and among Gentile regions and he is likely only in the first year of his ministry.



*He healed them all.* Jesus continues his ministry of healing, which in this case describes that he was healing *all*. We have seen this before in Matthew’s gospel.<sup>4</sup> This is not new. Matthew has on numerous occasions thus far shown us that Jesus had power to heal *all* diseases and *every* affliction; from leprosy to paralysis to fever, demonic oppression, storms, blindness, deafness, muteness, and even death. Jesus has compassion on these crowds of oppressed and helpless people and he healed them all. The conspiracy of the Pharisees does not stop him from healing.

*He ordered them not to make him known.* When Jesus healed these people, he “*ordered them*” to keep it quiet. This is strong language. The word ‘order’ is a stern and serious word.<sup>5</sup> Jesus gave a similar command to the man whom he healed of leprosy. To him Jesus said, “*See that you say nothing to anyone,*” but go only to the priest (Mt 8:4). He said the same thing after healing the two blind men. To them he said, “*See that no one knows about this*” (Mt 9:30). Again, this is perplexing.

This begs the question, Why did you say this Jesus? Why don’t you want your healing power to be known and know widely? Don’t you want more people to hear about you and come and be healed? Is not this the good news that ought to be proclaimed from city to city? If you’ve come to bring in the kingdom of heaven, then why not bring it on? Jesus, are you confused about who you are and what you’re supposed to do, because we certainly are?

## Jesus Fulfilled

Matthew answers our questions in the next sentence.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 4:23-25; 8:16; 9:35.

<sup>5</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 309.

**Matthew 12:17** (ESV) This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

Matthew is explaining that there are reasons behind Jesus' actions. He is not misunderstanding God's will, but rather **fulfilling** God's messianic plan. "**This was to fulfill**" refers both to **Jesus' withdrawal** and his **commands to keep quiet** about his miracles. Jesus' actions and his words are not in contradiction to, but rather in *fulfillment* of God's divine plan. This is the truth that Matthew wants us to see clearly.

Thus, he takes us back seven hundred years into Israel's past to the prophet **Isaiah**. Remember that "*the LORD does nothing*" without first revealing it to his people through "*his servants the prophets*" (Amos 3:7). God does this so that we will be able to discern his true work from the devil's deceptive work.

Isaiah lived and ministered during the reigns of "Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" (Is 1:1). Isaiah began his ministry "*in the year that king Uzziah died*" (Is 6:1), which was about 740 B.C. He lived long enough to record the death of Sennacherib, king of Assyria (Is 37:38), which can be dated to 681 B.C.



The Bible does not record the death of Isaiah however, extra biblical sources report that he was martyred by the wicked king Manasseh by commanding that he be sawn in two.<sup>6</sup> This is why he is often depicted with a saw. It is assumed that it is the death of Isaiah that is referenced in Hebrews 11:37.

## The Servant Songs of Isaiah

As Matthew is writing his gospel and recording the teaching and actions of Jesus, he is fully aware that much of what Jesus did and taught was hard to understand and hard to receive. Matthew yearns to convince his fellow Jews that Jesus is God's promised Messiah. Jesus of Nazareth is the long-awaited one who alone ushers in the kingdom of heaven. He does not want his readers to stumble over how Jesus conducted himself. So he explains Jesus' actions.

As he was writing, being helped along by the Holy Spirit<sup>7</sup> as he was writing, the Holy Spirit brought to mind the ancient words of Isaiah which described the nature and character of God's chosen Messiah. Matthew now references the beginning of what is referred to as The Servant Songs of Isaiah (42-53). In these chapters, God revealed to Israel—and anyone who has ears to

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<sup>6</sup> Allen C. Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 531.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Peter 1:21.

hear—what his Messiah will look like. Here is an example of the truth that *we must allow God's word to frame our understanding of messiah rather than our understanding of messiah to frame how we interpret God's word*. The failure to do this is partially what led to the spiritual destruction of the Pharisees.

## The Portrait of Jesus by Isaiah

Matthew quotes from Isaiah 42:1-4 to explain what Jesus is doing and saying. This is his longest quotation of any OT Scripture by Matthew, thus it is important to him. If you go back and read this portion in Isaiah, you will notice that it is not a verbatim quotation. This is partially because the acceptable standards of quotation among first-century Jews is different from our twentieth-century standards. While we demand verbatim faithfulness to original text and words of the author, they demanded faithfulness to the original idea of the text and author. Thus, using slightly different words to accurately describe the authors words and meaning is acceptable. If you compare Isaiah with Matthew's quote, then you'll notice that Matthew will occassinsaly use a slightly different word here and there to highlight truths about messiah that he wishes to emphasize. Essentially he is interpreting while quoting. Nevertheless, *Matthew is painting a fresh literary portrait of Jesus in full color by tracing the black and white lines of Isaiah's original image of God's Servant/Messiah written more 700 years before the birth of Jesus*.

## Beloved Servant, Spirit-Anointed Preacher

Isaiah quotes God in describing what his chosen messiah would look like. He will be a beloved Servant of God and Spirit-anointed preacher of the Gentiles.

### Matthew 12:18 (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."

**Behold.** Matthew wants your attention. Look! There's something to see here.

**My servant whom I have chosen.** The word '**servant**' (pais παῖς) that Matthew uses here can mean either 'servant' or 'son'<sup>8</sup>, while the Hebrew word used by Isaiah means only "servant."<sup>9</sup> Matthew is using creative writing to force his readers to think about exactly who Jesus is. In this case, he is both the Son of God<sup>10</sup> and "**chosen**" servant of God sent to accomplish the redemption of God's people. Isaiah connects the Servant with the fact of his being 'chosen' by God in three places in the Servant Songs (42:1; 43:10; 44:1).

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<sup>8</sup> Rick Brannan, ed., *Lexham Research Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Lexham Research Lexicons (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 286.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 4:3, 6; 8:29; Luke 1:32.

*My beloved with whom my soul is well pleased.* These words of God, spoken 700 years before the birth of Jesus, ring in our ears because we've heard them before in Matthew's gospel. God the Father spoke these very words over Jesus at his baptism (Mt 3:17). They will be spoken over him again immediately before his final trip to Jerusalem at Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain (Mt 17:7). God the Father is well pleased with his Son. God loves him and delights in him down to depths of his soul.

*I will put my Spirit Upon Him.* This anointing of the Jesus by the Holy Spirit also took place at his baptism, which was visible to all who were there as the Holy Spirit descended upon him like a dove (Mt 3:16). John the Baptist reports that this action of God the Father was the very means by which God had previously revealed to John that would signify the one chosen by God to be his messiah and the one through whom would come the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Jn 1:32-34). John notes that the Holy Spirit "*remained* on him" (Jn 1:32).

*He will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.* God's chosen servant and son would be one who was sent on a mission of *proclamation*. When Jesus began his ministry, in the synagogue of his hometown of Nazareth, Jesus stood up on the Sabbath day and unrolled the scroll of Isaiah (61:1) and said,

**Luke 4:18 (ESV)**

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives  
and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

After reading these words, rolling up the scroll, and sitting down, he said to everyone in the synagogue, "*Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing*" (Lk 4:21). The anointing of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus is first seen in his power and authority to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. Matthew affirms this as well (Mt 4:23). Mark also explains that immediately after his baptism and return from conquering Satan in the wilderness, the first thing Jesus did was begin a ministry of proclamation of the gospel (Mk 1:14). This is the first purpose statement Jesus made about his ministry. "*Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out*" (Mk 1:38).

*Justice.* God's messiah will bring justice. He preach what is right and condemn what is wrong. He will not be partial, but will be balanced in proclaiming God's truth. He will praise what is good and right truth while condemn what is bad and wrong and false.

χρίσις is more frequent in this Gospel than in any other New Testament book (12 times). It often conveys the notion of judgment, the passing of a sentence, which leads

to the meaning “condemn.” But the impartial weighing of evidence means that right is done, and the word is used, as here, for “justice” (cf. Luke 11:42). The servant will make sure that right is done to the nations as well as to Israel.<sup>11</sup>

That Jesus was concerned for the **Gentiles** early in his ministry is also clear from the beginning of Matthew’s gospel, even though he is primarily writing to Jews.

- He alone noted the inclusion of a Gentile women, Rahab, in Jesus’ genealogy (Mt 1:5).
- He alone pointed out the worship of Gentile wise men at the birth of Jesus (Mt 2:1-12).
- He alone explained that Jesus’ choice of Capernaum in “Galilee of the Gentiles” (Mt 4:15) was prophesied by Isaiah, thus part of God’s plan to include Gentiles in his redemptive work.
- He noted that Jesus praised the faith of a Gentile above all the people of Israel when he healed the centurion’s servant in Capernaum (Mt 8:5-10).

### Not a Bawdy Brawler

God through Isaiah continues painting the portrait of Jesus, but now he chooses negative terms rather than positive.

**Matthew 12:19** (ESV) He will not quarrel or cry aloud,  
nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets;

I believe this verse gets at the heart of why the Holy Spirit caused Matthew to think of this passage in trying to understand what Jesus was doing and saying in Galilee after learning about the murderous conspiracy of the Pharisees.

**He will not quarrel or cry aloud.** This explains why Jesus withdrew from the Pharisees. He was not going to **quarrel** and **argue** with them. These two words can be translated, to “strive; to wrangle; engage in strife.”<sup>12</sup> Also “to express differences of opinion, with at least some measure of antagonism or hostility—‘to argue, quarrel, dispute.’”<sup>13</sup> Jesus was not going to shout down the Pharisees. He was not going to get into a verbal fight with the Pharisees, at least, not today.

This was not the time to host a public debate with the Pharisees to prove that he was right. The time for a public showdown would come, but it was not yet the time. When antagonism rose, but “*his time had not yet come*,”<sup>14</sup> he would then withdraw. When his home townies wanted to

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<sup>11</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 310 footnote 48.

<sup>12</sup> James Strong, *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon* (Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 437.

<sup>14</sup> John 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20.



kill him in Nazareth, he simply left town (Lk 4:28-31). Jesus was not a coward, but he was a follower of his Father's timeline. Matthew wants you to see this. God's messiah is not a bawdy brawler. Messiah is meek. This is why Jesus withdrew.

**Nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets.** This does not mean total silence, for we've just seen that the messiah comes with the purpose of proclamation. However, this "silence" explains Jesus' commands "**not to make him known**" (Mt 12:16). Jesus does not need a media team to promote his miraculous power. Neither does he need unwanted publicity that would increase the hatred and animosity of his enemies before he has accomplished all that the Father had given him to do.<sup>15</sup> Jesus told them to remain quiet because too much public praise at the wrong time would not fit with God's sovereign timeline.

### Gentle and Lowly Leader

The next verse points to Jesus much in the way that he had described himself as "gentle and lowly in heart" from whom the weary could "find rest for their souls" (Mt 11:29-29).

**Matthew 12:20 (ESV)**

a bruised reed he will not break,  
and a smoldering wick he will not quench,  
until he brings justice to victory;

**A bruised reed he will not break.** A reed is the hollow stem of several kinds of tall stiff plants and grasses or a thin piece of wood. Reeds were used in musical instruments, as a writing pen, or sometimes as a measuring rod. They were readily made abundant from growth near bodies of water, such as a marsh or a river. They were inexpensive and easy to replace. But once they were broken or bent, they were tossed away as rubbish and quickly replaced. They are like straws in this way. Once you bend a straw it almost always cracks and is thus useless. Reeds are very fragile and can easily be broken if not handled with care.

Jesus is not like the messiah expected by a majority of Israelites. Messianic leaders were expected to lead with authority and power. They expected to be mighty military leaders who could throw Rome under the bus. The leaders of day "lorded their authority"<sup>16</sup> over those whom they were to lead. We've seen the same kind of leadership in some places in the church today. You either get on the bus that the leader is driving or else you get run over by the bus. Jesus is on a different bus. Jesus is a different kind of leader. Jesus is a different kind of Lord. **He does not throw people away to the rubbish heap because they are bent, broken, or bruised.**

**A smoldering wick he will not quench.** When you feel like your faith is about fail, Jesus is not the one to come to you and put you out of his misery. When you're barely making it, it will not

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<sup>15</sup> John 17:4.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew 20:25.



be him who comes to you saying, "Hey, let's be real. This is just not working. Maybe its time to move on." Jesus is not the kind of messiah who says, "You know what Thomas, I've had enough of your faithless doubting. I'm wasting my time on you." Nor is Jesus the kind of messiah who says to people like Peter, "Wow, public betrayal. You publicly betrayed me. Do you know how deeply you hurt me? And you even promised me you would not do what you did? Yeah, maybe you did have a hard day, but you've crossed a line and now there's no going back. I'm done with you. I will not forgive you." God's Servant does not "quench those with a faintly burning faith." Jesus gently fans smoldering faith into a flame.

**Until he brings justice to victory.** Isaiah's servant will eventually cause justice to win the day. He will bring justice to the point of victory over injustice. Through the work of this servant, right will triumph over wrong. This very thing is what God did through Jesus at the cross. At the cross, God condemned sin and yet provided grace to those who trust in him. Here's what Paul wrote about what happened at the cross. We,

**Romans 3:24-26 (ESV)** <sup>24</sup> ...are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness ...at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

God's justice condemned sin at the cross because Jesus had to die. However, God's grace is seen in the fact that all who put faith/trust in Jesus are justified by faith in Jesus because they are looking to him as the one who died for their sins. Christ's victory over sin vindicates God's justice and gives grace to all who have faith and trust in him. One day, the faithful will see that fullness of Christ's victory over sin, Satan, and finally death when he gives eternal life to his people.

**Matthew 12:21 (ESV)** and in his name the Gentiles will hope."

**In his name the Gentiles will Hope.** This is the gospel. The salvation that God worked through Jesus, who was a Jew, is the same salvation which can save a Gentile. "*Salvation is from the Jews,*"<sup>17</sup> but that same salvation is offered to Gentiles. In the salvation that comes from the Jews, the Gentiles can have hope!

There is hope for those who trust in his name, the name Jesus, which means, 'Yahweh saves!' When God was planning salvation for the Jews, don't think that he did not have you in mind. When God planned salvation for the chosen among the Jews, he also had his chosen among Gentiles in his gracious, redemptive mind.

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<sup>17</sup> John 4:22.

## Conclusion

What should we think? Here are nine reasons to hope in Jesus for the salvation of your soul. God described his beloved and chosen messiah through Isaiah 700+ years before Jesus was born. Consider Jesus' ministry and ask yourself, is this guy worth hoping in?

1. Isaiah's servant was one *chosen* and *loved* by God. Jesus was chosen and loved by God the Father so much so that he twice spoke from heaven saying so, first at his baptism and then at his transfiguration.
2. Isaiah's servant was delighted in by God. Twice God audibly proclaimed from heaven that he was *well pleased* with Jesus.
3. Isaiah's servant was *anointed* with the power of the Spirit. Jesus was anointed by the Spirit at his baptism and that anointing abided upon him as seen in his ability to heal every disease and affliction and cast out demons.
4. Isaiah's servant was anointed to *proclaim* justice to the Gentiles. Jesus' was manifestly anointed by God's Spirit to preach the gospel with divine authority since this ability was often noted by Jews and received even by many Gentiles.
5. Isaiah's servant was *not a public debater*. Jesus did *not quarrel* with the Pharisees.
6. Isaiah's servant did *not proclaim his popularity* in the streets. Jesus told those whom he had healed "not to make him known."
7. Isaiah's servant was gentle with *bruised* people. Jesus was a gentle leader with weak disciples. .
8. Isaiah's servant would *never quench* even the weakest faith. Jesus was persistently patient with doubters and deniers.
9. Isaiah's servant was to *bring justice to victory*. Jesus died on the cross to give grace to the humble, justly condemn the unrepentant proud, and to rise victorious over death.
10. Isaiah's servant was one in whom *Gentiles could hope*. Jesus died to save all who would receive him by faith, thus he is the one and only Savior for Gentiles and Jews. Jesus said, "Whoever comes to me I will never cast out" (Jn 6:37).

Do you know of anyone else in the history of humanity who even comes close to looking half as much like Isaiah's Servant as does Jesus?

Can you believe his promises? To save you (who are not yet believers)? To sustain you (who are already believers)? Won't you come to Jesus? Jesus fulfilled all that which was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah seven hundred years before. Therefore, hope in Jesus. Make him the foundation of your soul.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Why did the Pharisees conspire to murder Jesus?
2. Why did Jesus withdraw rather than stand up to the Pharisees?
3. Why did Jesus order those whom he had healed "not to make him known?"
4. When did Isaiah live and minister?
5. What was Jesus' response when he learned that the Pharisees were conspiring to kill him?
6. What about Jesus' response to his knowledge of the conspiracy caused Matthew to think of Isaiah's prophecy?
7. How did his response fulfill Isaiah's prophecy?
8. What do you find most attractive about Isaiah's description of Servant/Messiah?
9. Do you see Jesus in Isaiah's description of the Servant/Messiah? Why or why not?