

Isaiah 42:1-4

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[0 : 00] It's a huge privilege for me to be here with you this morning on this auspicious occasion! The occasion when Paul Levy wears a tie.

! But it is, I do count it a privilege to be with you on this very special day. There are a few days more special in the life of a church when men that God has raised up are acknowledged to be men that God has raised up and who begin ministerially their calling to serve the church of Jesus Christ. Whenever a visiting preacher comes to my own congregation I'm nosy enough to want to know a little bit about them to put a human context to their ministry.

My name, Ian Hamilton. The best thing about me, I'm married to Joan. I have four wonderful children. One of whom is here, David, with his wife Sarah.

And two of my granddaughters, Emily and Molly. I have another daughter who at this moment is in the midst of labour in Inverness.

[1 : 20] So, please God, by the end of the day we might have a fifth grandchild. We don't know the sex yet. It's all a secret until the last moment.

I served for 20 years in the Church of Scotland as a parish minister. 17 years in Cambridge. Loved every minute of both situations.

Last year we transitioned back to Scotland. I thought mid-60s it's time to do what I've always longed to do at some time in my ministry and become a theological teacher.

So, in addition to serving in Smithton, Free Church of Scotland, I teach historical theology in Edinburgh and teach patristics and Puritan pastoral theology in America.

They like the accent. So, that's a little bit about me. I was raised in Glasgow. In case you're wondering, the accent has educated Glasgow. It's amazing what 10 years of university will do for you regarding your accent.

[2 : 32] We are here to hear the Word of God. Please turn with me to Isaiah chapter 42 and to the first four verses.

If there is one thing I would want to be saying today to the men who have been ordained and installed as under-shepherds in this flock of Jesus Christ and beyond this flock of Jesus Christ in His Church Universal, it would simply be this.

Model your lives after the great shepherd-servant of the Church, Jesus Christ. Isaiah chapter 42, the opening verses, are the first of four servant songs.

Songs that increasingly unfold for us the identity and the character of the one described by God as His servant and who will come from God, commissioned by God to fulfil the purpose of God to be the saviour of the world.

And God is saying, Behold my servant. But if we have to understand these opening verses, we need to set them in their more immediate context because the first word of chapter 42, Behold, which is a summons for us to consider carefully and to give detailed attention to, is the third in a triad of beholds.

[4 : 20] If you look back to the previous chapter, verse 24, the Lord says, Behold, you are nothing. And He's speaking of idols.

Your work is less than nothing. An abomination is He who chooses you. And so God is saying, Behold, the idols of this world are empty, they are vain, they are nothing.

They can do nothing because they are nothing. And then in verse 29, Behold, they are all a delusion.

Now He turns from the idols to the idol makers, the idol worshippers, the idolaters. Not only are the idols empty and vain and worthless, those who make them are a delusion.

Their works are nothing. Their mental images are empty wind. And so the Lord God is summoning His creation to behold the emptiness, the vacuity, the vanity, the nothingness of all that this world counts important.

[5 : 31] And then you have the third in the series of beholds. Behold, my servant. The servant of the Lord, whom we know from the New Testament, Matthew 12, is none other than the Son of God in our flesh.

He is God's answer to the vanity, the nothingness, the emptiness, the delusions of this world. Behold, my servant.

And perhaps you could imagine people for the first time hearing those words and listening with tremendous anticipation. Who is this servant of the Lord?

Who is this great one? Who is God's answer to the vacuity and the emptiness, the nothingness and the vanity of this world? Who is this great servant of the Lord?

And the Lord Himself tells us, Behold, my servant, whom I have chosen, my chosen, in whom my soul delights, I have put my spirit upon him.

[6 : 41] He will bring forth justice to the nations. 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.

Behold, my servant. The Lord Jesus Christ is set before us in the Bible, promised in the Old Covenant and revealed in all his glory in the New Covenant.

He is set before us as the prototypical servant of the Lord. He is the one who exemplifies in himself what true servanthood means.

God's first servant son, Adam, failed and fell miserably and horribly in the garden. God's but here is God's better than Adam.

[7 : 58] God's better servant son, his own chosen, his own beloved son and he comes not to fail where Adam failed but to stand faithfully and resolutely to the last and to do so in humble servant hearted obedience and love to the Father who commissioned him and sent him.

And the Lord Jesus Christ himself was self-consciously aware that though he had been from times eternal the Son of God though there was never a moment when he was not the eternal Son of God he understood that he had come into the world to be the servant of the Lord.

He said in Mark's Gospel I have come not to be served but to serve and to give my life a ransom for many. He said as he faced the cross I am among you as one who serves.

and when the disciples stood in bewilderment as the Lord Jesus Christ washed their feet John chapter 13 as they almost drew back at the thought that he their Lord would stoop so low as to wash their feet he said to them I have left you an example as I have been to you so you are to be to one another.

Jesus Christ the servant of God is God's counter intuitive example to the world his counter intuitive answer to the world and that answer is bound up in a servant and what a servant the servant of the Lord is and it's true that every Christian is called to mirror in their lives the servant heartedness of the Lord Jesus Christ remember Paul's words in Philippians 2 let this mind be in you or among you that was also in Christ Jesus who though he was in the form of God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped or held on to he made himself nothing literally he emptied himself himself he emptied by becoming a servant let this mind be among you let the servant heartedness of the son of

[11 : 09] God be the distinguishing mark of your Christian life and that comes to pass because the Holy Spirit who first created in the holy humanity of Christ that servant heartedness comes to overlay that model that perfect model of servant heartedness on all of our lives it's his ministry of replication he has come to make us like our saviour that's what it means to be a Christian to be born again into the family of God and having been born into God's family to become the recipients of the Holy Spirit's replicating ministry God's ultimate purpose is to glorify his son and listen to this to make him the first born of many brothers he wants to populate glory with creaturely reflections of his son and at the heart of the

God man there is this obedience to the father not ontological eternal obedience he was ever equal to the father never subordinate to the father but in his holy humanity as our mediator he embraces his calling to be obedient in all things to the father as our covenant head he is majesty clothed with

meekness and servanthood every Christian is to be conformed to his likeness but uniquely I think every Christian leader who is called to mirror the headship and leadership of Jesus Christ in his church is called in a special way to model for the church what it means to be like Jesus Christ and at the heart of that modeling is a servant heart that says no matter what it may cost me I will seek God helping me your present good though it means laying down my life for that good I want to notice just four very brief things that we are told here about the Lord's servant we are told first of all that he would be dependent on the Holy Spirit behold my servant whom I uphold my chosen and whom my soul delights I have put my spirit upon him the Lord Jesus Christ who is the servant read Matthew chapter 12 the Lord Jesus Christ lived out his life in holy hearted dependence on the Holy Spirit he did nothing from womb to tomb without doing it in dependence on the Holy Spirit remember how he begins his public ministry in Luke chapter 4 the spirit of the Lord is upon me he lives out his life in faithful trustful dependence on the Holy Spirit and my brothers those of you who have been set apart this morning to be under shepherds in the flock of Jesus Christ and to reflect his servant heartedness you need to be men who model to this congregation what it means to live and to act in every sphere of your life in dependence on the new covenant ministry of the Holy Spirit anything you do you are to do in dependence on his gracious upholding and empowering you are to be pneumatic men men of the Holy Spirit and what is the great ministry of the Holy Spirit to bring glory to Christ the spirit is most honoured when Christ is most exalted and we live spirit dependent lives when we seek to live Christ exalting lives and people need to see in you as husbands as fathers as friends as leaders they need to see he is a man who glories in Jesus Christ and who is at his happiest and highest when Jesus is being exalted and that will mean you will be men of prayer remember those great words in Acts 6 when the apostles recognised that they couldn't do everything in the life of the church in Jerusalem and certain men are set apart because said the apostles we must give ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word there was

[16:51] John Bunyan who wrote you can do more than pray after you have prayed but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed prayer is to be one of the great spiritual realities that is woven through every sphere of your life that's why our Lord Jesus Christ prayed he prayed because without the Holy Spirit he could do nothing there wasn't a channel from his deity flowing into his humanity that would make his humanity not a true humanity and he couldn't therefore stand for us with us represent us and save us with every prayer he was saying Holy Spirit enable me help me sustain me support me that's why you have that almost unexpoundable verse in Luke's gospel where our

Lord agonises in the garden and the father sends an angel to comfort her in his holy sinless perfect humanity he needed the upholding of God to fulfill his divine calling the Lord's servant will be dependent on the Lord's spirit the second thing we notice here is that the Lord's servant will be un-self advertising he will not cry aloud or lift up his voice or make it heard in the street now that doesn't mean he wouldn't be an open-air preacher it didn't mean he wouldn't shout out and call people to himself the language here in his Hebrew form the language is saying he will not be self promoting he will not advertise himself he had come to glorify his father un-self advertising brothers in your shepherding of this congregation these dear people need to see that you are their servant for

Jesus sake that you're not out to promote yourself you're out to seek their good they may not always agree with you you may fail them as you most certainly will at times but please God they will never ever ever for one moment be able to say at his heart and what drives him in his service in this congregation is not himself but my good you are this congregation servant for Jesus Christ sake and so you are to pastor this congregation in such a way that they will know that Jesus Christ truly is the chief shepherd of the church that your pastoring will not make them for one moment think that you are the one who has ultimate responsibility for them but by the very way and manner in which you go about your work the way and the manner are as vital as the substance the words that you may speak they will see by your way and your manner that it's the

Lord Jesus who is the chief shepherd of this flock and that you are his servant and under him the servant of this congregation you will be unself advertising that's no easy thing because the devil is always seeking to infect us with the serpentine sin of pride you had it in the garden it was pride in Adam and Eve pride that they knew better than God self exalting self advertising pride that caused them to rebel who in their right mind would rebel against a holy gracious glorious good cosmically

creating God it's the serpentine infiltration of Satan self exalting over God and Satan will seek to serpentine his way into your life and you need every day to call upon the Lord to help you to put to death every self advertising self exalting self promoting thought but then the third thing the Lord servant will be gentle and kind and unthreatening to the weak the needy and the seemingly useless a bruised reed he will not break and a faintly burning wick he will not quench and the point that's being highlighted here is that this servant of the Lord would be like no other servant he would come with gentleness with tenderness with meekness he will come alongside the seemingly useless in the church of God and shepherd them safely to glory he will tell them that yes you are a bruised reed yes you are a dimly burning wick but you are precious to

[22 : 57] God your significance and value does not lie in your own self esteem but in the fact that you are bought with the precious blood of the Son of God that God made you and has imprinted his image upon you you be the kind of man that the weak and the retiring and the shy and the introverted and the broken will be able to say I can go to him and know that he will receive me just as I am and will seek to help me where I am it must have been breathtaking to be at the receiving end of the tenderness of the Son of God in our flesh think of how gentle he was with his disciples they would have driven you round the bend lord we're going to call down fire from heaven goodness me what have you learned how patient how forbearing he meets a

Samaritan woman at a well Jews have no dealings with Samaritans and he evangelizes her so sweetly at first and then the punch comes where's your husband well I don't have one well that's true you've had five you're now living with your six and very tenderly Jesus is saying I'm going to be your seventh and last man and then there was a woman caught in adultery I can never read that passage without thinking what kind of men must these men have been who were waiting to pounce on a woman and flagrant had her what kind of men they were that they brought her to Jesus she must have feared the worst and you know the story Jesus says which of you is without sin cast the first stone and we all melt away shamefaced and then you have this breathtaking moving climax I I find it hard to read without tears actually Jesus says to the woman where are your accusers she must have been absolutely bewildered well I don't know neither do I condemn you go and sin no more I remember for the first time reading Augustine the great late fourth early fifth century church father in this passage John 8 1-11 he has a stunning comment some of you might know I'll tell you what the Latin is and I'll translate it because the Latin is just stunning *relictis sunt duo misericordia* there remain but two misery and mercy isn't that stunning there remain but two misery and divine mercy clothed in holy humanity and brothers we are to be gentle as well as unthreatening we are to be patient and kind and be the kind of men that people in their brokenness can come to and say I need your help and we are in all the fragility and frailty of our yet fallen bodies to minister of the grace of Jesus Christ to them but then the fourth thing is very simply the Lord's servant in all of this would be undeviatingly faithful three times verse 1 verse 3 and verse 4 this is emphasized he will bring forth justice to the nations verse 3 he will faithfully bring forth justice verse 4 he will not grow faint or be discouraged until he has established justice here is a servant who will not turn aside from his calling here is a servant who will pursue come what may cost what may the calling entrusted to him by his heavenly father brothers it's required of stewards 1 countings 4 to be found faithful you are called to model the undeviating faithfulness of the savior in your ministerial pastoral care of this congregation you are called to be undeviating in your resolve to guard this flock from the errors that swirl about the church of

Jesus Christ and that so easily find their way into the life of the church to infect it you are to be men who so know the word of God and are so rooted and grounded in the theology of that word so beautifully exemplified I think in the Westminster standards that you have an antennae alert to deviant truth truth that seems to be okay but you detect there are things not quite right about it you understand there are trajectories here that are going to harm God's people you are to be faithful even though it will cost you everything the Lord Jesus was obedient unto death and the good of this flock may yet who knows require your death you think well maybe that's a bit extreme well

[29 : 37] Jesus said to everyone who considered following him Luke 9 unless you take up your cross daily and follow me you cannot be my disciple and he wasn't saying unless you're willing to bear a few indignities you know the life is full of crosses and people might bad mouth you he's not talking about that he's saying unless you're ready to die every day for me don't even consider following me this is not where discipleship ends after 10-20 years this is where discipleship begins and you'll notice it says he will not grow faint or be discouraged you see there will be much to tempt

you to discouragement and to faint heartedness there will be difficulties some sheep are pains in the derriere they are in a sense we all are some sheep you scratch your head and you think

Lord why are they here for my glory and for your sanctification and you will be discouraged with yourself you look at yourself and you see at times sin and weakness that just depresses you and you say Lord I'm not fit to be anything in your kingdom brothers please God that thought will be with you every day of your life that you will never ever think well you know I think I'm the kind of man that IPC Ealing was desperately in need of please God every day you'll say with Paul I am the chief of sinners not I was 1 Timothy 1 not I was the chief of sinners I am the chief of sinners and every day you'll be praying

Lord be merciful to me the sinner Jesus Christ resisted the temptation to turn aside he resisted the temptation to settle for mediocrity he resolved to go on to the very last some of you know the name Eric Alexander one of my dearest friends I followed him in his ministry in Eamills in Earshire thinking venison to mince boy what a change he told me of the first occasion he met Martin Lloyd Jones in Westminster Chapel a friend had taken him and he'd heard the doctor it was a great sermon and at the end of the service there was a huge queue of people waiting to talk to the doctor and Eric said to me he said you know Ian I was with my friend and as we got closer to the doctor he seemed to be saying only one thing to everyone who spoke to him go on and he said

Eric said to me I thought you know these people have pewed up to talk to him did he not have something more he could have said to them and then I realised what greater thing could he have said to them go on brothers go on go on when the world the flesh and the devil conspire to turn you back go on go on when your own sins rise against you cover them afresh in the blood of Jesus Christ go on be undaunted fight the good fight keep the faith finish the race go on because Christ shed his blood for this flock and if it was worth his blood it is worth your every effort let us pray
God