

The Surprising Servant (Matthew 12:15-21)

Something a bit odd and surprising is present in that text—not what we might expect

- Jesus withdraws in the face of opposition
- Jesus warns people not to tell others about Him
 - Both of these actions are seen repeatedly in Matthew (4:12; 14:13; 15:21; 16:5 / 8:4; 9:30; 17:9)

Why?

- Obviously, Jesus could have handled the opposition (Cf. Matt 26:53 and twelve legions of angels)
- Didn't His mission as the Messiah necessitate people knowing about Him?
- Didn't the angel announce: **I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.**
- Doesn't He later instruct the disciples to go and tell the whole world about Him?

Why the **withdrawal**, why the **secrecy**?

- **Mark 1:40-45** and **John 6:24-29**, NASB
- Not to be overrun for the wrong reasons (i.e. mission misunderstood)
 - So, **verse 16** (He warned them not to tell others about Him)
 - Cf. **Verse 19**
 - I.e. His was not an approach aimed at proving self against the Pharisees and proclaiming Himself loudly (Jesus would not have had Instagram)
 - That is part of it eventually (Cf. **the Great Commission**)

But the immediate aim and trajectory of Christ's ministry at this point is the Cross

- This was hard for anyone present at the time to grasp
 - (1) Messianic expectations, coupled with (2) His clear power and authority
 - **People, both then and now, have certain expectations they associate with the privileges of power and authority**
 - **While it may not be entirely clear what the popular expectation of a Jewish messiah was, it is probably fair to say that the idea of a self-sacrificial servant was not one very widely championed (or even considered).¹**
 - This **combination** of great power and authority seen in Jesus and His strange meekness and humility (led to the Cross) **bewildered** even those closest to Him
 - **See: Matthew 16:13-23**
 - So, to limit the sort of hyped up publicity approach to His messiahship by others was **to avoid confusion about the nature of His mission** (still nearly all missed it)

So Jesus continues in the Gospels to withdraw from confrontation and instruct people to keep it on the DL

- Until the moment of the Cross (Matt 26:45 = **The hour has come**)
- He told His disciples that after His resurrection they could reveal Him **See: Matthew 17:1-9**

Now, take note of **verse 5** (**chapter 17**)

- What does that language/moment/declaration sound like? **See: Matthew 12:17-18**
- And that sounds exactly like what? (**Matthew 3:16-17**, HCSB)
 - There we see: The Spirit; chosen language; the Father's delight; and servant/Son clarification

So, look what Matthew is doing here in telling the story about Jesus

- Bringing clarity to the confusion and grounding it in ancient Scripture
- Confusion because at the beginning the angel said, "**Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people...**
- Matthew 4 = **The people living in darkness will see a great light...**
- And now there is this sort of secrecy happening... withdrawal from confrontation—is this the same guy?

¹ Roy B. Zuck, *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994). 75.
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So Matthew shows us how the ancient prophecies ([Isaiah](#)) connect with the Father's declarations ([3:16-17](#) and [12:17-18](#)) **to confirm Jesus' identity** ([12:18](#))

Matthew is tapping into a series of passage in Isaiah known as the "Servant Songs"

- Where God talks about this **servant** He would have **who would accomplish His mission** to save and redeem His people and bring about peace and righteousness on earth
- There is a series of them in Isaiah ([42:1-4](#); [49:1-6](#); [50:4-9](#); [52:13-53:12](#))
 - Double fulfillment (Israel and the Messiah)
 - They climax in the famous Isaiah 53 passage—becomes clear who it is about ([Isaiah 53:3-6](#), NIV)

Matthew uses the first of these "servant songs" to help us understand why Jesus is this way and where it all leads

- Cf. v. 17 = **This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah**
- Confirms His **identity**; reveals His **humility**; highlights His **compassion**; predicts His **victory** (v. 20b-21)

What is perhaps most surprising about the Servant is the way the victory comes about

- The reversal of the world's order (verse 20) = why things feel slow sometimes (Just kill the Pharisees!)
- The kindness of the Lord + The way of the Cross (**Father forgive them...**)

This way in which the **Messiah was identified and revealed and worked**, is the pattern for our **self understanding** and **service to God**

- (Cf. Matthew 12:18)
 - Jesus was the **chosen, anointed, beloved** Son (in Him, we are too)
 - [Ephesians 1:3-5](#), NIV
 - **Love, chosen, sonship, pleasure**
 - Jesus had the **Spirit** in Him (We do too)
 - [Ephesians 1:11-14](#), NIV
 - The **Spirit**
- We pattern our service to God after Jesus
 - (Cf. Matthew 12:19-20)
 - The disciples would be endowed with great power and authority ([Mark 3:15](#); [6:13](#)). But like Jesus, they were to use this authority in humble service for others
 - [Mark 10:42-45](#), NLT
 - A different approach to power and authority
 - **Humility** and **compassion**
 - [Philippians 2:1-8](#), NIV
 - **Loving each** other from a place of **humility**
 - [Galatians 6:1-5](#), NLT
 - Dealing with one another with **gentleness** and **compassion**

The life and ministry of the disciple of Jesus is to take on the flavor of the life and ministry of Jesus

- [Matthew 16:24-26](#), NIV

Flows from our identity as the **chosen, beloved**, celebrated **sons** and **daughters** of God!

And though this road is **cruciform**, it leads to glory

- After Cross: [Philippians 2:8-11](#), NIV
- Same road for us: [James 4:10](#), NIV
- Sharing in His glory: [Romans 8:14-18](#), NLT

Where are we refusing to be like the Surprising Servant?

- Come back to the Cross...
- Lean into your true identity...
- Jesus has gone there for you