



Dear friends in Christ Jesus,

We call them “Civil Servants.” This is a term we have used to describe elected officials. Individuals who are supposed to be serving us, the citizens. And I’m happy to report that very many do that faithfully.

Some, however, do not. His name was James Walker. In 1926, he was elected the Mayor of New York City. Almost immediately, the rather flamboyant Walker gave himself a pay-raise from \$25,000 to \$40,000. Big money in those days. When challenged about this, Walker raised his hands in mock astonishment and responded, “*Why, that’s cheap! Think what it would cost if I worked full time!*” Walker left his wife to run around with a famous showgirl of the era. He looked the other way at the speakeasies that popped up all over town—Prohibition was the law of the land at that time. He was obviously on the take—from many different sources, and he was proud of it. In his spare time—and he had a lot of it, Walker wrote pop ditties. One became a big nation-wide hit: “*Will you love me in December (as you do in May)?*” Finally, in 1932, with the corruption charges piling up, Walker was allowed to “resign.” Immediately, he fled the country for an “extended vacation” in Europe. He stayed abroad until danger of prosecution had passed.

Sadly, there have been other Walkers over the years. So perhaps all of us—to a degree—have become jaded and pessimistic about our Civil Servants. Yet today, the Prophet Isaiah places before us the ultimate Civil Servant. And the Prophet assures us, “**This Servant Will Not Let You Down!**”

### **I. Because He Is More Than Honest. He is Righteous.**

Our text begins with this formal announcement! “*Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight.*” It’s as if God the Father has called a press conference. As the Press begins to snap pictures and prepares to ask questions, the Father stands on the center stage. But he is not alone. There is Someone else with the Father. His Servant, His Chosen One. And the Lord is delighted to introduce His Servant to you and me!

But maybe we are less than delighted to be introduced. Maybe we’re convinced this Servant will be just like all the others. Maybe because of our pessimism, our bitterness, our world-weariness, we’re convinced there is absolutely no one we can trust. No one we can depend on. No one who can fix the mess of our life, much less the stinking mess of sin in our world. But that’s not true, is it! Listen as our Lord announces, “*This is what the true God says, the LORD who creates the heavens and stretches them out, who spreads out the earth and everything that it produces, who gives breath to the people on it and life to those who walk on it.*” Isaiah reminds us of what we confess every time we open our mouth to speak the words of the Apostles’ Creed. “*I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth.*” Ours is the God of limitless power who “*laid the foundation of the earth. . .determined its dimensions. . .stretched out the surveying line across it. . . (set its footings) and set its cornerstone in place.*” Our Lord created this world more easily than you and I can convert a spare bedroom into a model train-room! (Job 38:4-6)

This Almighty Lord is the one who makes an earth-shattering announcement. “*I am the LORD. I have called you in righteousness. I will hold on to your hand, and I will guard you.*” Remember, this text is almost like a press conference convened by God the Father. But in what I just read, the Heavenly Father isn’t speaking to you and me or to the Press. Rather he is speaking to His Chosen Servant. The Father wants his Son to know that he has been hand-picked for the most important assignment of all time, and that the Lord will stand by him and support him. Why? Because God’s Servant embodies “*righteousness.*” God’s servant is as honest as the day is long. Someone who would never be on the take. Someone who would never turn, even for an instant, even with a single thought, to the dark side.

Seven centuries after Isaiah’s coverage of this Divine Press Conference, our Savior, the Ultimate Civil Servant, stood before his enemies. They were constantly trying to dig up some dirt on him—on something he said, or something he did. But they couldn’t. And they knew it. Jesus asked them, “*Who of you can convict me of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me? Whoever belongs to God listens to what God says. The reason you do not listen is that you do not belong to God.*” (John 8:46-47 EHV)

At the end of Jesus’ ministry, after his enemies captured him, tried him, brutalized him and brought him before another civil servant, that spineless worm called Pontius Pilate, what did Pilate have to say about Jesus? “*I find no basis for a charge against this man.*” (Luke 23:4 EHV) There could be no charges against Jesus, because he was and remains “*righteous.*” Jesus is the One announced by the prophet Jeremiah: “*Listen, the days are coming, declares the*



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*LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, who will reign wisely as king and establish justice and righteousness on earth. . . This is his name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.*” (Jeremiah 23:5-6 EHV) There are no skeletons in Christ’s closet. No scandals waiting to be uncovered! Instead, the Apostle Paul assures us that *“Christ Jesus. . . became for us the wisdom from God, namely, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”* (1Corinthians 1:30 EHV)

Jesus is the ultimate Civil Servant. He will never lie to you. Never betray you. When he makes a promise, it is much more than empty campaign rhetoric. **This Servant Will Not Let You Down!**

## II. Because He Keeps All His Promises!

*“A chicken in every pot. A car in every garage.”* The Republicans took out paid ads to make that promise during the 1928 Presidential election, which resulted in Herbert Hoover being elected. The Great Depression derailed the campaign promise. But not even the Great Revolution orchestrated by Satan himself can derail the promises our Heavenly Father has made about His Servant. Let’s go back to the Press Conference recorded by Isaiah! *“He will not cry out. He will not raise his voice. He will not make his voice heard in the street. A bent reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not snuff out.”* Jesus is not like some of our politicians today who love to showboat and make grandiose claims on camera. Instead, in some respects, our Savior shies away from the limelight. Think about how he came to our earth! He wasn’t born in a palace in Jerusalem, but in the stable at Bethlehem. He didn’t lead a huge army of angels to free us. He fought alone. And he didn’t bulldoze his way into our lives with His almighty power. Instead, gently, His Holy Spirit whispered to you and me in the water and word of Baptism and in the words of the Gospel and tenderly rescued us from our sin and brought us to faith.

Yes, our Savior is tender-hearted. He proves it in this way. *“A bent reed he will not break.”* When the snow finally melts, and on a warm day under the bright sun you bed down in the long grass of a meadow or along a river bank, you will break some reeds, and you will bend some reeds. The bent ones aren’t dead, but they are very weak. Just a little more pressure, and those *“bent reeds”* will be broken. When Jesus comes to us, he sees that we are those bent reeds.

*“And a dimly burning wick he will not snuff out.”* A dimly burning wick, a smoldering wick on a candle won’t put out much light. It will just sputter, and smoke, and, if left untended, it will finally go out. When Jesus comes to us, he sees we are those smoldering wicks.

Jesus sees how bruised and broken we are because of our sin. He sees how life’s setbacks often threaten to snuff us out. A child taken from us in a tragedy. A failed business. An “F” in a class. A broken home. A lost job. Ruined health. Not to mention, the really stupid decisions we make sometimes. The selfish ones. The sinful ones.

But Jesus knows all about that. Yet Jesus doesn’t storm his way into our lives with his law, shaking his finger, and shouting *“Shame on you!”* Instead, Jesus found another way to set things right. Isaiah puts it this way. *“He will faithfully bring forth a just verdict. He will not burn out, and he will not be broken, until he establishes justice on the earth. The coastlands will wait for his law.”* Isaiah promises universal justice produced by Jesus Christ! But where is this universal justice in our world today? In terrorists blowing up soldiers and civilians in Afghanistan? In rogue nations rattling their nuclear saber? In our own nation’s judicial system that, at times, seems to be almost fatally flawed?

How can the Father claim that His Servant will *“faithfully bring forth a just verdict”*? Because God the Father looked ahead and saw His Servant’s faithfulness. The Father saw that His Servant would not *“burn out or be broken”* until he established justice. God’s Servant would set his face like flint, and nothing would turn him aside from his cross. The Father saw all that. And He heard Christ’s cry, *“It is finished!”* and the Father knew that then at last he would pound his gavel and issue the verdict that the sins of all people of all time are forgiven, because His Servant died and paid for them in full. This is God’s divine justice: meted out in righteousness. Forged and tempered by His limitless grace!

*“Here is my servant, whom I uphold!”* There have been many press conferences held over the years, since the one recorded by the Prophet Isaiah. Back in 2014, news of a Bridge Scandal in New Jersey prompted a press conference. And a Governor, a Civil Servant, had to stand up and take the heat, answering some pretty tough questions.



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Isaiah's Press Conference is different, however, because God's Servant is different. He is more than honest as the day is long. He is righteous. Plus, God's Servant keeps all his promises. Even those we especially treasure during the long, dark days of winter. The Epiphany promises that our Heavenly Father made with these words, *"I am the LORD. I have called you in righteousness. I will hold on to your hand, and I will guard you. I will appoint you to be a covenant for the people, to be a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring the prisoners out from the dungeon, and to bring those who sit in darkness out of prison."* Too often, I fear, we take light for granted. It's as close as a switch. Until something happens to jar us from our lethargy. There's a storm and the power goes out in the middle of the night. Even if I'm sound asleep, I usually wake up almost instantly. It's as if I have a darkness sensor in my brain. So I stumble out of bed and grab the nearest rechargeable flashlight plugged in next to the bed. And then light some candles. I can also put on a headlight, and even spend some time reading a book. Yet the experience can be a little bit unnerving. When it's so dark, the wind is howling outside, and it's bitter cold. What relief when the power comes back on!

Every day, do we remember how much we need the light that is Christ? The only Light that is the path home to heaven? The only One who can bring purpose and power to our life! Concerning Him, the Apostle Paul once wrote, *"For the God who said, "Light will shine out of darkness," is the same one who made light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ."* (2Corinthians 4:6 EHV) Don't squelch the light that is Christ through apathy, worry, fear, doubt or unbelief. Rather, bask in His light every day. And be warmed. **This Servant Will Not Let You Down! Amen.**

Rev. Glenn Schwanke