

Isaiah 42:1-9ⁱ

Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.
He will not cry or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
a bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.
He will not grow faint or be crushed
until he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his teaching.
Thus says God, the LORD,
who created the heavens
and stretched them out,
who spread out the earth
and what comes from it,
who gives breath to the people upon it
and spirit to those who walk in it:
I am the LORD,
I have called you in righteousness,
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to the people,
a light to the nations,
to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.
I am the LORD,
that is my name;
my glory I give to no other,
nor my praise to idols.
See, the former things have come to pass,
and new things I now declare;
before they spring forth, I tell you of them.

About the First Reading: Isaiah 42:1-9

Today's reading begins with the first of the four servant songs in Isaiah. The writer might have intended these songs to describe his own prophetic mission, or the mission of Israel to the nations, but Christians understood these songs to describe Jesus, as the Messiah.

This song is written in the recognized formula for the king's designation of a court official. The servant is presented, his power is attested, his mission and manner of accomplishing it are defined. With gentleness he will "bring forth justice to the nations" (v. 1), that is, bring all people into the covenant relationship with God and one another.

Verses 5-9 are the first part of a response to this servant song, describing the servant's mission more fully. Speaking to the servant, God designates him as the means whereby the covenant will be extended to all.