

PARADOX:

Finding Clarity in Life's Contradictions

Our lives are filled with apparent contradictions. We often say illogical things like, "Less is more," and "The only constant is change." Literally speaking, such statements can't be true, but deep down, we know they are right. And so it is with God sometimes.

In the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah found God in life's paradoxes. He saw God as a garden flourishing in the desert, as a slave who is more powerful than his masters, and as a healer who is mortally wounded. Through his prophecies, Isaiah revealed a deeper reality about God that cuts through our apparent contradictions and points directly to our crucified savior, Jesus Christ. At The Story, we'll explore these deeper truths beginning Sunday, March 2, through Easter Sunday.

March 9, 2025 - Part 2 - The Servant King (Isaiah 42)

Think of an example or two of the kind of confusion and contradictions most people just accept or choose to live with today.

Why does our Enemy (Satan or "the Devil") love confusion and obfuscation? What does living with confusion and a lack of clarity do to people?

Par-a-dox (*noun*)

A seemingly _____ or _____ statement or proposition which, when _____, may prove to be well founded or true.

How is a PARADOX different from a contradiction?

In today's reading from Isaiah 42, we're going to see two seemingly contradictory visions of the same person - Jesus Christ. The first vision is found in Isaiah 42:1-7.

Isa 42:1-7 - "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope." This is what God says, "I the Lord have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

All signs point to this being a prophecy about Jesus:

- Isaiah indicated the one God sends would be a "servant." **What did Jesus say about himself in Matthew 20:28?**
- Isaiah said this man would not be an agitator or a street fighter. **How did Jesus respond when his apostle, Simon Peter, tried to pick a street fight in John 18:11?**
- Isaiah said this servant would open blind eyes, set captives free, and liberate those who sit in darkness. **What did Jesus say about himself 700 years later in Luke 4:18?**

What is the significance of the "bruised reed" and "smoldering wick" analogies? How did Jesus fulfill these prophecies as well? (See Matthew 11:28-30)

If Jesus was "moved with compassion" for broken, hurting people many times throughout his life on earth, and if he's "the same yesterday, today, and forever"

(Hebrews 13:8), what does this mean for people who feel like bruised reeds and smoldering wicks today? What does this mean for you?

Isaiah's second vision of Christ is found later in the same chapter in verses 13-15.

Isa 42:13-15 - The Lord will march out like a champion, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal; with a shout he will raise the battle cry and triumph over his enemies. For a long time I kept silent.. and held myself back. But now, like a woman in childbirth, I cry out.. I will lay waste the mountains and hills and dry up all their vegetation; I will turn rivers into islands and dry up the pools.

How is this description of Jesus different from the first?

If “meek, tender Jesus” is good news for those who are hurting or lost, how is “mighty, triumphant Jesus” good news for us today?

So, which is it? Is Jesus sweet, or is he sovereign? Is he tender, or is he triumphant? Is his burden light, or is his sword heavy?

Why is it important not to box Jesus into the version of him that makes us comfortable? How have you boxed him in in the past? How do you see him differently now?

Your notes:



Starting This Week: Lenten Midweek Prayer

On Wednesdays March 12-April 16, we'll gather at 7pm in the Sanctuary to spend some time dwelling on Scripture and in prayer both individually and as a group. Come as you are and as you are able!



NEW! Hoops & Prayers (For 2nd-6th Grade)

Hoops & Prayers is a new sports outreach for children to learn basketball skills and drills while also learning how to pray! Meets every Sunday (starting March 23rd) from 12:30-2pm. Visit our website to learn more and register: [thestory.church/events](https://www.thestory.church/events)



Donation Drive for Houston Welcomes Refugees

This month we're supporting our Strategic Partner organization by putting together necessary kits for their homes here in Houston! Visit our website to learn more about the drive details and items needed: [thestory.church/events](https://www.thestory.church/events)