



Invest time each week to expand your vocabulary and deepen your faith.

23 June 2024

WORD OF THE WEEK

Servant Songs [\]'sər-vənt [']sɒŋgz\

Viewed as predictors of the vocation of Jesus, poems or oracles from the prophecies of Isaiah (42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-11; 52:13–53:12). The songs refer to the faithful **servant** of God who is entrusted with a mission to his community and the nation and the suffering **servant**: rejected, beaten, and facing death because of his challenging message.

Pronunciation: <https://tinyurl.com/Take5-servant-songs>

CONTEXT

Through the **Servant's** ministry, the "bruised reed" will be strengthened and the "dimly burning wick" will be enflamed.
—Graziano Marcheschi, M.A. D.Min.

The fourth song is the famous "Suffering **Servant**" of Isaiah. It is a remarkable passage because it suggests . . . that God accepts one individual's suffering to atone for the sins of others.

—Lawrence Boadt, C.S.P., Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction

WHY IT MATTERS

Jesus has favorite scripture passages that he uses in his teaching. Deuteronomy and the books of prophecy score highest in frequency. But as Jesus "grows in wisdom, age, and grace," it's conceivable that he comes to understand his earthly mission through the **Servant Songs** of Isaiah that sing of the Messiah who comes not to rule, but to suffer for the sin of the world.

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church (713): The Messiah's characteristics are revealed above all in the **Servant Songs**. These songs proclaim the meaning of Jesus' Passion and show how he will pour out the Holy Spirit to the many. Taking our death upon himself, he can communicate to us his own Spirit of life.

RELATED WORDS

Oracle | Suffering Servant | Messiah

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Is Jesus the Messiah?

The word *Messiah* has a complex history. Between Messiah and Christ—both of which mean "anointed"—lies a thousand years of evolving expectations. Messiahs aren't the only biblical saviors. Moses, the judges, Nehemiah, Ezra, and even Queen Esther are identified as saving figures. Israel needs frequent rescue, so the Bible contains many rescuers. Add to this gallery the biblical kings. Messianism reaches its height with Judah's second king: David. David's lineage is endowed with an everlasting anointing. Davidic kings don't "save the world": they are just supposed to keep Judah safe. Problem is, they don't.

The prophet Isaiah reboots messianic hope when he predicts a Messiah loyal to God, who establishes justice and peace. All nations have a stake in his Messiah. Yet, Isaiah's **Servant Songs** add a sober note: This Messiah will come in humility and go the way of suffering. Other prophets embrace this vision. So does Jesus.

—Alice Camille, from *Questions Catholics Ask* <http://tinyurl.com/QCA-messiah>

REFLECTION OF THE WEEK

SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST (JUNE 24)

Respond to your deepest calling

The name John means "God's gift," and such was the Baptist. From the moment he came on the preaching scene, he proved himself a powerful, captivating herald of God. His bold, dramatic, austere, and uncompromising style is what many people had in mind when they hoped for a Messiah. But John understood that his role was to prepare the way for the One who was to come, the light of our salvation.

READINGS: Isaiah 49:1-6; Acts 13:22-26; Luke 1:57-66, 80 (587 <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/062424.cfm>). "Behold, one is coming after me; I am not worthy to unfasten the sandals of his feet."

FAITH IN ACTION

John's prophetic witness and commitment to his call are his legacy to us. Share in his gift by being true to your own Christian calling.