



Isaiah 50:1-11 “Joy Beyond the Darkness”
Advent Week 3: “Behold My Servant — Advent Through Isaiah's Songs”
By Pastor Onan Coca, December 14, 2025

Isaiah 50:1-11

Thus says the Lord: “Where is your mother's certificate of divorce, with which I sent her away? Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities you were sold, and for your transgressions your mother was sent away.

2 Why, when I came, was there no man; why, when I called, was there no one to answer?

Is my hand shortened, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, by my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a desert; their fish stink for lack of water and die of thirst. 3 I clothe the heavens with blackness and make sackcloth their covering.”

4 The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. 5 The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward.

6 I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard;

I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. 7 But the Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. 8 He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. 9 Behold, the Lord God helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.

10 Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the voice of his servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God.

11 Behold, all you who kindle a fire, who equip yourselves with burning torches! Walk by the light of your fire, and by the torches that you have kindled! This you have from my hand: you shall lie down in torment.

[READ THE TEXT]

“People of God, this is the Word of God!”

Congregation - “Thanks be to God!”

[PRAY FOR UNDERSTANDING]

Good morning! If I haven't gotten the chance to meet you yet, I'm Onan Coca, one of the Pastors here at Highlands Community Church, and I am so glad to be worshipping here with you on this beautiful Lord's Day.

This morning, we are continuing our celebration of the Advent season. We've been doing that by walking through the four “Servant Songs” in the book of Isaiah. Isaiah is vitally important to our understanding of the Gospel, as evidenced by his being quoted more than 65 times in the New Testament. In his Servant Songs, we see him prophesying directly about our Savior, Jesus. A couple of weeks ago, we were in Isaiah 42, where we learned that the Servant of God, Jesus, is able to hold our hope. We can trust in Him, we can put our hope in Him, because He will not fail us. Then, last week, we learned from Isaiah 49 that God Himself had given us Jesus to bring us peace with Him and with one another.

This week, we'll look to the third Servant Song in Isaiah 50 to learn about the Joy that Jesus has won for us. Joy. Is that surprising for any of you after reading Isaiah 50 just a few moments ago? Where was the joy in that, you might ask. *(Here's a hint – look for the vindication of the Messiah + the redeeming of His people.)*



Isaiah 50:1-11 “Joy Beyond the Darkness”
Advent Week 3: “Behold My Servant — Advent Through Isaiah's Songs”
By Pastor Onan Coca, December 14, 2025

I mean, we know joy, right? The Christmas season, the time we celebrate the first Advent of our Messiah, is the epitome of joy. We sing about joy. We decorate with joy. We tell our children that Christmas is about joy. And yet if you open Isaiah 50 and read it honestly, *joy* seems like the very last word you would use to describe this chapter.

The opening verses use the imagery of divorce and selling children into slavery. A few verses later, we meet a beaten servant — His back flayed, His beard torn out, His face spit upon. And then the chapter ends with imagery of darkness, fire, and torment. This does not look like joy.

But Isaiah 50 becomes one of the most astonishing fountains of gospel joy in all of Scripture, the moment you see Jesus standing right in the middle of it. When the Holy Spirit opens your eyes to see Christ, **the faithful covenant husband, the obedient Servant, the willing sufferer, the vindicated King**, then suddenly this whole chapter glows with Advent light.

The author of Hebrews understood this. In Hebrews 12:2, he alludes back to Isaiah chapter 53 when he tells us that Jesus, **“for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame...”** Isaiah 50 is part of that joy.

The humiliation described here is the humiliation Jesus willingly embraced because He knew the joy, a joy of everlasting enjoyment, that was coming. And that joy is not only His, but it is ours in Him, as well!

This brings us to our main idea for today.

Main Idea: The obedient Servant endures humiliation so that guilty rebels may have everlasting joy, and Jesus counts that coming joy worth it all.

Jesus endured the humiliation of this world and the shame of our sin because He looked forward in Hope and Peace at the Joy He was winning, for Himself and for us.

Isaiah 50 confronts us with a sobering reality: humanity has a problem, **a problem that no amount of effort, religion, or sincerity can solve**. But it also shows us something more: God Himself has provided the solution in the person of His Servant, and His Servant calls His people to walk in the light of His vindication. There was a moment in rereading this chapter when I suddenly saw the Gospel, and then I began seeing it in every line and verse. And that’s what I’m hoping we’ll see together today.

This text presents three movements:

In verses 1-3, **Yahweh** is speaking, and we see “the problem,” which is sin. Our sin. Then in the “Servant’s Song” section, verses 4-9, **the Servant** is speaking, and we see “the solution.” It’s Jesus. Finally, in verses 10 and 11, **Isaiah applies** the Servant’s message, and we see “the choice,” either we choose to walk in the light, or we will lie down in darkness and torment.

I *could* preach this as fire and brimstone, Isaiah gives that option, but he is actually aiming at something deeper: joy.



Isaiah 50:1-11 “Joy Beyond the Darkness”
Advent Week 3: “Behold My Servant — Advent Through Isaiah's Songs”
By Pastor Onan Coca, December 14, 2025

So let's begin with the context. Remember, Isaiah was written roughly 700 years before the first Advent of Christ. It was written around the time of Israel's fall and about 100 years before the fall of the kingdom of Judah. In Chapter 50, Isaiah begins by speaking the words of the LORD directly and addressing a difficult topic: Israel's exile.

I. The Problem — Sin (Isaiah 50:1-3)

Thus says the LORD:

“Where is your mother's certificate of divorce, with which I sent her away? Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, **for your iniquities you were sold, and for your transgressions your mother was sent away.**

[2] Why, when I came, was there no man; why, when I called, was there no one to answer? **Is my hand shortened, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?** Behold, by my

rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a desert; their fish stink for lack of water and die of thirst. [3] I clothe the heavens with blackness and make sackcloth their covering.”

Before the Lord presents His Servant in verses 4-11, He begins with an indictment in verses 1-3. He starts by identifying the real problem. It's not Babylon, it's not the nations, it's not circumstances. The problem is not that God has failed. The problem is **sin**.

Listen to the Lord's question in verse 1:

“Where is your mother's certificate of divorce, with which I sent her away? ... Behold, for your iniquities you were sold, and for your transgressions your mother was sent away.”

The people felt abandoned. They assumed God had divorced His bride, cast her off forever, rejected His own. But God answers that accusation directly: **“I did not file for divorce. I did not leave you. I have not broken our covenant, YOU HAVE. Your sin separated you from Me.”**

And this is the consistent message of Scripture. **Psalm 51:4** reminds us that all sin is ultimately against God Himself, and **Isaiah 59:2** says, **“Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God.”**

Humanity's greatest problem has never been political oppression, economic uncertainty, or social instability. The greatest problem is, and has always been, the human heart, rebellious, blind, and unwilling to hear the Lord.

Look at verse 2: “Why, when I called, was there no one to answer?” This is spiritual deafness. Sin blinds and sin deafens, threatening our destruction.

And then verse 3 makes the point painfully clear: God's power is not the issue. He can clothe the heavens with blackness. He can dry up the sea. He can shake nations. The problem is not His ability, but our rebellion. Our sin.

This is where the gospel must always begin. Because as theologian **J.C. Ryle** wrote in his book *Holiness*, **“A right knowledge of sin lies at the root of all saving Christianity.”**



Isaiah 50:1-11 “Joy Beyond the Darkness”
Advent Week 3: “Behold My Servant — Advent Through Isaiah's Songs”
By Pastor Onan Coca, December 14, 2025

Before Advent becomes joy, it must be need. Before the Servant becomes beautiful, He must become necessary. Why? Because this is where true joy begins, with the assurance that our sins, which have separated us from God, have not exhausted God’s covenant love.

God’s love does not run out. His arm does not grow weak. The same God who parted the sea still rescues today. And the Servant in verses 4–9 is the final proof that God has not divorced His bride but has come Himself to restore her.

II. The Solution – Jesus (Isaiah 50:4-9)

Beginning in verse 4, the Servant Himself speaks. These words point forward to Jesus Christ, the true and greater Israel, the perfect covenant-keeper. And in these verses, we are invited inside the heart of Jesus before He ever took on flesh.

⁴ The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught, **that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary.** Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught.

⁵ The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward.

A. Jesus’ Perfect Obedience

He is the perfectly taught One, the perfectly taught and perfectly obedient Son, whose entire mission begins with listening. **“Morning by morning He awakens... My ear to hear as those who are taught.”**

This describes a life of unbroken communion between the Son and the Father. And oh, by the way, this morning-by-morning communion is not drudgery, or duty, but a delight for the Servant. **Psalm 40:8 “I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”** The servant finds joy in His obedience and fellowship with the Father.

Here is a Servant who listens, who obeys, whose ear is opened morning by morning. Where Israel had a rebellious heart, the Servant has a responsive heart. Every morning of Christ’s earthly life, His heart awakened eager to obey. Not once did He wander as Adam wandered, as Israel wandered, as we wander.

This obedience is not incidental; it is intentional. It’s purposeful.

Deuteronomy 18 promised a prophet who would speak God’s words.

Psalm 40 said the Messiah’s ear would be opened.

John 8:29 shows Christ fulfilling it: **“I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.”**

Isaiah 50:5 says, **“I was not rebellious; I turned not backward.”**

These are words no human being but Jesus could ever say. Where we shrink away from God’s commands, Jesus leaned in. Where we resist the Father’s will, Jesus embraced it. Where we sin daily, He obeyed daily.

And this is the foundation of our joy: Our salvation rests not on our obedience, but on His perfect obedience for us.



Isaiah 50:1-11 "Joy Beyond the Darkness"
Advent Week 3: "Behold My Servant — Advent Through Isaiah's Songs"
By Pastor Onan Coca, December 14, 2025

In Advent, we remember that Christ did not simply die *for* us; **He lived for us**. He kept the law where we broke it. He walked straight where we swerved. He obeyed in our place. And He says that He did all this so that He, **"may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary."**

So, when we weary ones stand before God, the Father does not see our inconsistent obedience but the flawless righteousness of His beloved Son, who sustains us with His Word. **How could joy not spring from that?**

B. Jesus' Willing Suffering

⁶ I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.

Verse 6 moves from obedience into suffering: **"I gave my back to the smiters..."**

Notice, it doesn't say, "They took My back"... it says **"I gave"** it.

"My cheeks to those who pull out the beard..."

Again, it doesn't say, "They surprised Me"... it says **I offered Myself**.

"I did not hide My face from disgrace and spitting."

If you read Matthew 26-27 alongside Isaiah 50:6, it sounds like Matthew has turned prophecy into a historical narrative. Judas kisses Him. Soldiers strike Him. They mock Him, spit on Him, tear at Him, scourge Him, crucify Him.

The Servant is not caught; He offers Himself. He is not trapped; He is sent. He is not defeated; He is accomplishing the Father's will to bring Him glory. Yes, from eternity past, God planned not only the obedience of the Son but also the suffering of the Son.

Acts 2:23 says Christ was delivered up **"according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God."**

Acts 4:27-28 says Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles, and the Jews did **"whatever Your hand and Your plan had predestined to take place."**

Every strike of the whip, every mockery, every insult was under the sovereign hand of God, not to destroy the Son but to redeem His people. What humanity meant for shame, God meant for salvation. What the world intended for humiliation, God intended for glory. And through that planned suffering, God secured the eternal good of His people.

And **none of this was coerced**. Christ's arm was not twisted. He did not stumble into suffering. No, He walked into it willing, resolute, and full of love.

And that love, that blood-bought love, is the root of all true joy. **John 15:11: "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you..."**



Isaiah 50:1-11 “Joy Beyond the Darkness”
Advent Week 3: “Behold My Servant — Advent Through Isaiah's Songs”
By Pastor Onan Coca, December 14, 2025

But how did He endure this terrible suffering? What sustained Him?

C. Jesus' Confidence and Vindication

Verses 7-9 tell us:

⁷ But the Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.

⁸ He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me.

⁹ Behold, the Lord God helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.

“But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced.” This is the heart of Christ’s confidence. The Servant endures because the Father sustains Him.

This echoes Luke 9:51, Jesus “set His face” toward Jerusalem. Nothing would turn Him back. Why? Because He knew vindication was coming.

“He who vindicates Me is near... Who will declare Me guilty?”

Christ found joy in the certainty of His vindication. It’s a joy that is grounded in the Father’s approval even *before* the resurrection! Remember, after being baptized by John the Baptist, a crowd witnessed the miracle of the Father speaking audibly from Heaven in **Matthew 3:17 “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”**

The Servant was completely confident in His vindication because He knew the God who Sovereignly planned all these things.

As Pastor Bill told us last week, God was not surprised by the crucifixion. The resurrection was not God’s reaction to Christ’s suffering; there was no change of plans. **The resurrection was God’s plan from the very beginning; moreover, the resurrection is God’s great act of divine vindication, in which God decisively declares that Jesus is Lord and Messiah.**

Romans 8:33-34 reminds us of this when it says: “It is God who justifies.” And **Romans 1:4** tells us that Christ was **“declared to be the Son of God... by His resurrection.”**

Christ was confident because His vindication was guaranteed by the sovereign decree of God, and therefore, the vindication of all who are united to Him is guaranteed as well. Christ suffered nothing randomly. Every blow had a divine purpose: **to save you.**

On Good Friday, Jesus suffered. On Easter Sunday, He triumphed. And He did it all for the **“joy that was set before Him.”**



Isaiah 50:1-11 “Joy Beyond the Darkness”
Advent Week 3: “Behold My Servant — Advent Through Isaiah's Songs”
By Pastor Onan Coca, December 14, 2025

That joy had two parts:

1. **The glory of the Father** — Jesus was accomplishing the will of the One who sent Him.
2. **The salvation of His people** — Jesus knew He was bringing many sons and daughters to glory.

Hebrews 2:10 “For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.”

Jesus endured humiliation and suffering because He looked past it to **YOU**. He looked to His redeemed bride and to the joy He would secure for His people.

This is the joy of Advent: The Light walked into darkness so that those in darkness could walk in light.

It's also important that, in this season, we remember that Advent calls us not just to look to the past, but also to the future. Yes, Christ **has** been vindicated, but *our* vindication is still future, Rom. 8:18 - 25 and **1 John 3:2** remind us of this, “Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”

So, we rejoice in the Servant's first coming, in His obedience, suffering, and resurrection, but our Advent joy also looks forward to His second coming, when darkness will be banished, every injustice reversed, and every son and daughter revealed in glory.

We rejoice, because we know, for certain, the truth of what Jesus told us in **John 8:34-36:**

“Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. ³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Oh, what a glorious hope. What wonderful peace. What marvelous love! This is true joy.

The third servant song ends in verses 10 and 11 with

III. The Choice — Light or Dark (Isaiah 50:10-11)

¹⁰ Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the voice of his servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God.

¹¹ Behold, all you who kindle a fire, who equip yourselves with burning torches! Walk by the light of your fire, and by the torches that you have kindled! This you have from my hand: you shall lie down in torment.

Here at Highlands, we don't often do altar calls, but in some churches, they act as a time at the end of the service for the hearers to respond to what they've heard. These verses serve as Isaiah's prophetic altar call. Isaiah is drawing a line: everyone must choose whose light to follow, Yahweh's or their own.

Friends, you have a choice. There are only two ways to live in light of what the Servant has done.



Isaiah 50:1-11 “Joy Beyond the Darkness”
Advent Week 3: “Behold My Servant — Advent Through Isaiah's Songs”
By Pastor Onan Coca, December 14, 2025

A. The Way of trust – v. 10

“Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.”

Jesus echoes this in **John 12:46**: “I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.”

This is gospel joy: Even if your life feels dark, even if you cannot see the way forward, if you trust the voice of the Servant, you have the light of life. Our joy does not depend on circumstances but on the One who conquered the darkness.

Or choice number 2?

B. The Way of self-reliance – v. 11

“Behold, all you who kindle your own fire... this you have from My hand: you shall lie down in torment.”

Those who try to create their own light, their own righteousness, their own path, will discover too late that those sparks lead to judgment, **not** joy.

Church, there are only two ways to live:

Trust the Servant and find joy. Trust yourself and find torment.

I hope that you are beginning to see what the LORD is doing in these Servant Songs – In chapter 42 we saw Who the Servant IS → He is our HOPE. In chapter 49, we see what the Servant DOES → He brings us PEACE. And now in chapter 50, we have seen Why the Servant SUFFERED → for the JOY that was set before Him: to glorify His Father and save a people for Himself.

And so, The Hope **of** the Servant, and the Peace **from** the Servant, now erupts into **the Joy secured** by the Servant!

Call to Obey – Advent Joy

So what do we do with Isaiah 50? What does Advent joy look like for us, right now?

Let me leave you with **three takeaways**, three calls to obedience in the joy of Christ.

1. Rest in God's unfailing covenant love.

Are you tired and worn out this Christmas? Nothing going right? Can't do anything right? Or like your sins and failures are just overwhelming?

Church, your sins ARE many, but His mercies are more. Your failures ARE real, but God has not written a certificate of divorce against His people. The One who split the sea can restore the sinner. This Advent, **rejoice** in the God whose love outlasts your rebellion and **rest** in the work that Jesus has done.



Isaiah 50:1-11 “Joy Beyond the Darkness”
Advent Week 3: “Behold My Servant — Advent Through Isaiah's Songs”
By Pastor Onan Coca, December 14, 2025

2. Follow the Servant in daily obedience.

“Morning by morning,” Christ listened to the Father. Let this season be one where you draw near again to God’s Word, His voice, His will. Read your Bible every day. Fellowship with God’s people regularly. Pray and let your Father hear your voice in joy and in pain. When you feel the pull of your sin, fight back and don’t give in to those temptations. Brothers and sisters, **joy grows in the soil of obedience.** Not perfect obedience, Christ has already provided that because He knew you couldn’t, but sincere, grateful obedience as those who belong to Him.

3. Come to Christ in faith; the gospel call to joyful obedience.

To me, Isaiah chapter 50 is a call to sinners to repent and believe the Gospel. Friend, if you are walking in darkness, trust the Servant. If you are building your own fire, extinguish it and come into His light. Jesus endured the humiliation and suffering of Isaiah 50 so that rebels like us could have everlasting joy. He was beaten and rejected, so you could be embraced. He was condemned, so you could be justified. He walked in darkness, so you could walk in the light of life.

Friends, Christ is the fountain of all good. If you would have peace, hope, or joy, go directly to Him. This Advent, obey the gospel call, and as you hear His voice today, do not harden your heart. In faith, turn from your sins to Jesus, the Servant who was not rebellious, and He will give you joy, inexpressible, overflowing, and filled with glory.

Because The obedient Servant endured humiliation so that guilty rebels might have everlasting joy, and Jesus counts that coming joy worth it all.

May the Lord cause the light of His Servant to shine in your heart this Christmas, and may that light fill you with everlasting joy.

Let us pray.

[CLOSING PRAYER]

[COMMUNION]

[BENEDICTION]

[RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY]

Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 2, Chapter 16 and 17

George Eldon Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*

J.C. Ryle, *Holiness*