

# Salvation and Love

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*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.*

ISAIAH 42:6

**W**e have all experienced what it is like to wake up in darkness—that moment when we are grasping for the light so that we can see the world around us clearly. Perhaps like me, you never fully grew out of that fear of the dark. Darkness is a universal fear because it can create spaces of danger, whereas light guides us toward safety. Especially before the invention of electric lights, darkness meant that a person was more likely to experience an attack by enemies or dangerous animals.

It should not surprise us, then, that light is a powerful metaphor for safety and salvation in Isaiah as he describes God's servant fulfilling this role. We

see this idea in the New Testament as Jesus is described as the “light of the world” (John 8:12; 9:5), echoing the descriptions of God’s servant as the light of salvation for the whole world in Isaiah 42, 49, and 60.

Isaiah places two ideas next to one another as he pictures God’s servant: God’s global salvation and God’s deep intimacy. On the one hand, the servant will bring salvation on a global scale. Like the light of the sun that reaches across the earth from end to end, God’s servant will bring salvation to all people, every tribe, every nation (42:6; 49:6; 60:3). This salvation is multiethnic, multicultural, and available for all.

On the other hand, when Isaiah depicts this salvation—the servant’s global light—he also anchors this vast vision in God’s deep intimacy. This God formed the servant within his mother’s womb (49:5), labors like a woman giving birth for his people’s salvation (42:14), and remembers his people like a nursing mother who remembers her baby at her breast (49:15).

We likewise see this combination of global salvation and personal intimacy in Jesus. Jesus is the one who brings a kind of light that honors the covenant God made with his people (42:6). This light gives freedom to those experiencing captivity (42:7)

and draws nations and kings out of their darkness to Jesus’ light (60:2–3).

Jesus’ light also provides personal and specific hope to those who have been sitting in dark dungeons awaiting their release and to those experiencing blindness (42:7). This light both shines across vast expanses around the world and peeks into the smallest crannies of our individual homes. This is the Jesus we await during Advent: the gleaming light illuminating and encouraging those all around the globe, and the candle glowing in each of our lives, reminding us of God’s nearness.

*Ponder* Isaiah 42:1–14;  
49:1–15; and 60:1–3.

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How do you see the global nature of God’s light in these passages? Where do you see its intimacy? How do you see both in Jesus?