

“Our Suffering Saviour”

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Here in Isaiah 53 we have all of the things we’ve learned so far come together. In the Garden of Eden we saw that only a blood sacrifice initiated by God can cover one’s sins. When Abraham went to sacrifice Isaac, God provided a lamb to die in his place. When God brought Israel out of Egypt He told each family to sacrifice a lamb and spread its blood on their doorposts believing by faith that the shedding of the lamb’s blood would spare the death of the firstborn. Then last week we saw at the once-a-year Day of Atonement that two sacrifices pictured the payment and the removal of the nations’ sins once for a year.

Now, God prophecies in Is. 53 that He would initiate the sacrifice of a sinless human, whose shed blood like a sacrificial lamb would pay for the sins of Israel and the world. And yet, it is quite ironic that this is the most ignored passage in the Old Testament by Jewish people. Their rabbis tell them not to read it or they explain it away by saying it’s talking about the suffering of the nation, not an individual.

It will be quite clear that this is talking about one individual whom God will choose to suffer for the sins of the world as a lamb sacrificed for sins. In this chapter we will see the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus prophesied 700 hundred years before it happened.

Is. 52:13-53:12 is the 4th of four ‘Servant Songs’. 42:1-9, 49:1-13; 50:4-11 and 52:13-53:12, each one predicting the mission and purpose of the Messiah, culminating in the most detailed passage concerning Jesus’ death and resurrection.

God speaks in the first 3 verses giving a summary of Jesus’ ministry. Ch. 53 describes the sufferings of the Messiah, spoken mostly by Isaiah representing the people of Israel. The last three verses emphasize Jesus’ triumph and glory with God resuming as the speaker in the last two. Here God gives us Jesus’ purpose. Jesus, the Lamb of God would suffer to show

The Wisdom of Sacrificial Love **(52:13-15)**

See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.

To act wisely means ‘to know what to do in a given situation so as to bring the intended result.’ Jesus obeyed the will of the Father which was to bring about the intended result of the payment of our sins on the cross, so that we in believing, would be saved and share in His exaltation.

Jesus would be “raised” from the dead, be “lifted up” at His ascension and He is “highly exalted” now since being resurrected as He sits at the Father’s right hand waiting to return to defeat God’s enemies. Isaiah shows us that the ‘servant’ Jesus, is divine. He uses the same words in two other places to describe God. Back in Ch. 6 when Isaiah saw the glory of God, he wrote,

6:1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple.

In 57:14 God speaks through Isaiah saying,

¹⁴ *And it will be said: "Build up, build up, prepare the road! Remove the obstacles out of the way of my people."*

¹⁵ *For this is what the high and lofty One says— he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite."*

God's servant is high and exalted like God. God's wisdom in securing salvation for mankind involves sending His own servant to die. And He would be exalted through the cross and resurrection. Immediately after Judas Iscariot left at the last Passover to go and betray Him, Jesus said to the 11

John 13:31 *Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will glorify the Son in Himself and will glorify Him at once."*

God's wisdom is foolishness to man. God promises to lift us up too, but only when we humble ourselves before Him.

Humble yourselves under God's mighty hand that He may lift you up in due time" (1 Pet. 5:6).

Jesus' suffering is an example for us to follow. When we go through trials and sufferings, we need to act wisely by bringing about God's intended result: to glorify Him in them. This is part of our maturing to be like Christ resulting in ourselves being changed more from glory to glory.

This is upside-down thinking that baffles unbelievers. If you want to be exalted and lifted up in the world, you put yourself first. Not God. He says, I lift up those who humble themselves, even those who suffer. God assures us here of Jesus' resurrection and exaltation because of the wise act He's going to do – suffer.

¹⁴ *Just as there were many who were appalled at him— his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness—*

¹⁵ *so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.*

Here we prophetically read about the extent of His suffering; the scourging and crucifixion left Him so marred He was unrecognizable. But He will 'sprinkle' many nations. "Sprinkling" is sacrificial language. Jesus' blood was sprinkled even for the nations of the world. They were not initially told these things since the message of the gospel was first to the Jews, but when it came to them, many understood it in contrast to the Jews.

They will see, they will understand but not until the Holy Spirit opens their heart to know these things. God says kings and people from nations will understand these things, things that God's own people would not believe even though – as we're reading now – they were told these things beforehand.

As God reveals His Son's sacrificial love for us as the Lamb of God, we are told why many will not accept Jesus.

The Rejection of Sacrificial Love **(53:1-9)**

God said the wise actions of His servant would result in His being exalted and being lifted up, but not before the horror of suffering. Jesus the Messiah's sprinkling of His own sacrificial blood will cause many "nations" Gentiles, who initially were not told the message, to eventually hear and understand. The believing nations are now contrasted with the unbelieving Jews in 53:1. Isaiah asks rhetorically,

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

The answer? Very few. Gentiles would believe what most Jews widely rejected. Why?

People Reject Jesus Because He was Ordinary (vv.1-3)

He grew up before Him like a tender shoot and like a root out of the dry ground.

While Jesus' conception was a miracle, His upbringing was no different than any other Jewish boy living back then. The tender shoot directs the reader to Isaiah 11:1

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from His roots a branch will bear fruit.

Joseph and Mary were descendants of David, but so were many people's kids nothing in His physical presence said 'I'm from royalty'. *"No beauty or majesty . . . nothing in his appearance that we should desire Him"* is not saying Jesus was ugly or horrible to look at. No one, especially, children would ever have approached Jesus if He were ugly or disfigured. He was ordinary like us. When people begin to wonder if Jesus was the Messiah, many rejected Him because they knew Him. He was the carpenter's son from Nazareth.

Where did this man get these things? What's this wisdom that has been given Him, that he does even miracles! Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't His sisters here with us?" And they took offence at Him. (Mark 6:2-3)

What else bothered people about Jesus? He was despised and rejected because He was a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering. He hung around with beggars, the poor, the lame, sinners, prostitutes and tax-collectors – the sufferers of society, those whom the religious right avoided.

The Jews understood the Messiah was David's descendant but they pictured Him as a military strategist, a savvy politician, and a charismatic leader who could rally the nation to overthrow the shackles of Rome. This is what they thought "arm of the Lord" meant. But the power of God does not come in human ideas of power. Jesus' power was in His humility. So most Jews rejected Him because He was ordinary and

People rejected Jesus because He died (vv.4-6)

The gospels show the people were looking for a political Messiah who would deliver them from the Romans. Jesus never denied He would do this, but He did say this was not the time. The sufferings must come before the glories.

Jesus told the 12 when they were arguing about who would sit beside Jesus in His kingdom

You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead whoever wants to become great among you must be

your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many."

Paying for our sins. *'He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows.'* *'Pierced for our transgressions, crushed by our iniquities; by His wounds we are healed.'* "Took up" and "carried" means to carry a heavy burden. "pierced" means to die by a fatal wound. "crushed" means grinding to dust. The Messiah must die for our sins because that alone brings us peace and healing for our broken relationship with God.

Jesus became the sacrifice by God, who laid on Him the iniquity of us all, so that by believing in Him, the curse of sin on us would be removed and we can be restored with God. Many misjudged Jesus because He suffered. The Jews thought He was stricken by God, being punished for blasphemy, claiming to be equal with God. Yet Jesus willingly obeyed the Father's will to take on human flesh, to live a sinless life and to be the unblemished sacrificial Lamb that God required for the payment of our sins.

In the sacrificial system, the sacrificer placed their hands on their animal, confessing that this animal was dying in their place in order to have their sins forgiven. We all deserve to die for our sins. *"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way."* That's why we all physically die. *"The wages of sin is death"* but *"the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Jesus became an ordinary human being to do the extraordinary work of suffering for us on the cross to make forgiveness of sins available if we choose to place our faith in Him. Yet, these are the very reasons why some people reject Him. They want a God who will do something spectacular to save them, not one who . . .

Passively suffered (vv.7-9)

"He was oppressed, afflicted, did not open His mouth, as a sheep before her shearers is silent."

They taunted Jesus while He hung on the cross with ...

"He saved others, but He can't save Himself! Let this Christ, the King of Israel, come down from the cross, that we may see and believe" (Mark 15:31-32)

"You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in 3 days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!"

How could He stay there and take that? He could have called 10,000 angels but He died alone for you and me. Jesus did not passively die He courageously chose to die for us when He didn't deserve death. While the suffering of Jesus on the cross was the most excruciating way to die, the last 3 verses point out the goal of His death –our joy

The Joy of Jesus' Sacrificial Love **(53:10-12)**

¹⁰ Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. ¹¹

After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

¹² *Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

“Yet it was the LORD’s will to crush Him . . . and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.” The Hebrew word for ‘will’ means ‘to delight in, to be pleased or to have joy in someone or something’. ‘God wasn’t pleased to inflict pain on Jesus, but what He was pleased with was Jesus’ obedience to allow God to lay our iniquities on Him to die on the cross.

“The LORD makes His life a guilt offering”. The guilt offering was the offering of restitution. If you had robbed or hurt someone, you had to make restitution and pay it back in full plus 1/5th of the value. It was also the offering you made when you robbed God of what was due Him. Whether you failed to worship Him, or failed to bring an offering or somehow robbed God of honour through inappropriate words. Lev. 5:16 says the guilty

“He must make restitution for what he has failed to do in regard to the holy things.”

When we sin we dishonour God. We fail to treat God as holy. Jesus became our guilt offering and made restitution for what we owed God. Jesus’ last words on the cross were “It is finished”. The Greek word used there was often used to mark something as paid in full. Jesus pleased God by paying in full the price for our sin. And in doing so Jesus looked forward to the joy of seeing us one day.

“He will see His offspring”. Jesus children are those who’ve believed by faith that He paid the price for our sins and rose from the dead. *“And prolong His days”*. Jesus will live forever. Death cannot stop divinity. *“And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in his hand.”*

In John 17:4 knowing He was going to do God’s will, He said, *“I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work You gave me to do.”*

Vv.11-12 talk about how you and I share in their joy.

After the suffering of His soul he will see the light of Life and be satisfied, by His knowledge my righteous servant will justify many and will bear their iniquities. He poured out His life unto death and was numbered with the transgressors. For He bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.

Jesus became the sacrifice God required to pay for our sins. If we want to experience His joy now and glorified bodies with Jesus for all eternity we must believe He died for our sins and rose from the dead. V. 12 focuses on our eternal reward.

Therefore I will give Him a portion among the great and he will divide the spoils with the strong because he poured out His life unto death.

Faith in Jesus’ death and resurrection results in rewards. When we believe in Jesus we get the presence of the Holy Spirit dwelling inside us. He seals us with the promise of eternal life. He gifts us with new abilities to do God’s work with God’s people for God’s glory.

But glories only come after suffering. They cannot be separated. Crucifixion without resurrection = no hope. But resurrection brings hope and joy and purpose. Jesus suffered so that God would be glorified. God sent Jesus so He would be glorified. Jesus died and rose for the joy set

before Him – us, who have come to believe in Him and now, show that by living for His glory and not ours.

If we choose to live for Jesus Christ, sufferings and trials will come our way. We then are to follow the example of Jesus in suffering so that God would be exalted in us.

1 Pet. 2:20 if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. ²¹ To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ²² “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” ²³ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

To believe in Jesus is to identify with Jesus. Our suffering Saviour who

For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us at oliviet@rideau.net.