

I. The Center of the Song: The Elephant in the Room

A. Structure [SLIDE 1/3]

The Servant...

52:13-15 — Commended by God

53:1-3 — Loyal to God’s Will

53:4-6 — Substitutionary Death

53:7-9 — Loyal to God’s Will

53:10-12 — Commended by God

B. Eye drawn to the center → his suffering & death (“pierced” and “crushed”)

C. Our resistance to the Servant’s suffering and death. we filter through...

1. Overfamiliarity: Those of us who are overfamiliar with these ideas — ideas merely part of the Christian world view. They are taken for granted. We feel little or no connection to them. Thus, we feel little empathy for the Servant who suffers in this story. So we don’t identify with this. We don’t see ourselves in light of the text, being judged by God’s word. It might even feel melodramatic, an overreaction, to our “shortcomings.” “The Servant was crushed because of my gossipy conversations?” “He was killed because I slept with someone I’m not married to?” Seems extreme. Because, they’re *just* shortcomings. “Nobody’s perfect,” right? (This is perhaps the most

common way people these days shake off personal responsibility.). We have churches full of people who claim Christ, yet who are incredulous about their own impoverished spiritual state. **[SOM contrast — Matthew 5:1-10 — Are we brave enough to ponder our sins? Journal each point of the Beatitudes]** Without this contemplation, I fear, we subscribe to Christianity and simultaneously find no need for the ways of Jesus. We may even teeter on spiritual pride: Do we really believe, deep down, that we are so bad that an innocent must be crushed in our place? “What made my life terrible was what was forced upon me. And now I’m supposed to find peace in the same thing happening to someone else? So don’t think about it. Just acknowledge it. Co-opt this grand and disturbing truth into black and white print, into a system of belief and simultaneously not feel it. Turn it into a bullet point.

2. Our Hurts: There is a rapidly growing trend that the “bad” parts of us were shaped by trauma and, “Yeah, I’ve done some lousy things. But you would, too, if you had my story!” So we come to believe that our main problem, at the root, is hurt, not sin. So we jettison sin and guilt and replace them with hurt and wounds. Sadly, we leave little room for nuance. We create an either-or false dichotomy. We are, indeed, shaped by our hurts. But each of us also imports a vulnerable personhood into this world that urgently needs proper parenting and training prior to any hurt we endure. So, yes, we are broken, but we are also guilty.
3. Explicit: Those of us who ponder human suffering — those of us who lament the presence of evil and its horrific effects on the vulnerable — can feel repelled by the idea of God’s punishment in this text. It feels unfair and seems to make God monstrous.
 - a) [SLIDE 2/3]: Julie Rea
 - b) [SLIDE 3/3]: Matadi Sela Petit, 8
 - c) Indonesia Tsunami (over 200 killed as of this morning)
 - d) We transfer all this onto God (“the monster”) and Jesus (an innocent bystander). And so we must recall the teachings of Scripture about the nature of God. He is Trinitarian. God chose to suffer; God absorbed into

himself all human suffering; and he also became a sacrificial offering for the vast evil in our world for which we all bear responsibility. Jesus was absolutely innocent, but Jesus chose this suffering in our place. He faced the full weight of human and Satanic evil, taking on its full effects. Jesus wasn't banished from heaven. God the Son willingly entered our world and flesh.

e) **Philippians 2:5-11**

II. Humanity's Assessment of the Servant

A. 52:1-3

1. God's saving arm revealed in a surprising way
2. Root: Horticultural comment...a shoot gardeners would snip off

B. 53:3 — "Despised" = easily dismissed

C. 52:15 — I think the reason why so many of us are incredulous about the faith is because we try to worship amongst cultural Christianity that still despises and rejects the ways of Jesus. We are just as shocked/startled that the saving arm of God isn't what we want it to be.

III. Our Expectations Thrashed

A. Contrast: Servant's exaltation vs his humiliation

B. God's saving arm revealed how??

IV. 53:13 — Will our eyes be opened?