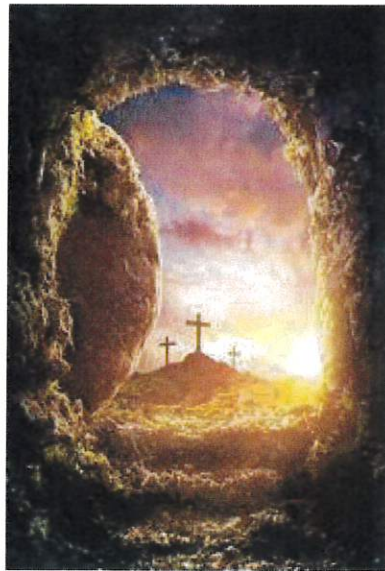


# First Baptist Church

Rockingham, NC



The Journey to the cross and empty tomb

April 11-16, 2022

This week will take us on a 6-day journey that leads to the cross and an empty tomb. This journey will take a different road than what you may be used to for Easter. We will be using Isaiah 53 as our key scripture passage. Through the week, pray for God to speak to you as you read the different passages of scripture. Ask God for clarity and understanding as you discover the Savior on the cross and then the empty tomb. This journey will change your life. Fasten your seatbelt. Let the journey begin...

## Day 1 | Monday

*Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.*

### Isaiah 53:1-2

Today's passage begins with two questions that go unanswered in the passage. However, Jesus himself provides the answers in the Gospel of John:

*While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"*

### John 12:36-38

So, who has believed what they have heard? And to whom has the power (arm) of the Lord been revealed? The answer is to those that believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Those believers that heard these words from Jesus and, by extension, all believers including us today. Everyone that, by the power of God, has been given eyes to see and ears to hear the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. **It is this gospel that has the power to save us and will save all who believe in Jesus.**

**Who is this Jesus?** Nothing remarkable from his appearance which Isaiah said was like "a root out of dry ground". Apparently, those who created pictures of Jesus as handsome and physically impressive have never read this passage. He

was not someone that would have stood out in a crowd or would have been voted Homecoming King. He was a simple carpenter's son who worked with his hands.

Jesus was not born to royalty although he was a descendant of David. He was born in a stable and lived in a location, Nazareth, that did not have the best reputation. The Apostle John tells us:

*Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."*

### **John 1:45-46**

Even Nathaniel, a "soon-to-be" disciple of Jesus was prejudiced against Jesus because of where he lived.

But this simple, common, unremarkable man was indeed the Son of God who set aside his deity and became a human like us. He did this so that through him, we - as sinful creatures - would have a way back to the God who created us. And this was God's plan all along. It was not as if God had a plan and man made a mess of it and so God had to insert Jesus as plan "B". Jesus was God's plan all along. **God, from all eternity, never had one thought of you outside of Jesus. May we, in response, never have one thought of life outside of Jesus.**

***Our prayer for today is that we feel the weight of what God has done for us through Jesus. Pray that God will burden you with gratitude for Jesus' sacrifice for us on the cross and that Jesus' highway to the cross leads us back to God who created us.***

## **Day 2 | Tuesday**

*He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.*

## **Isaiah 53:3-4**

Yesterday on our journey we were introduced to the God-man Jesus. This Jesus *"who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men"*(Philippians 2:6-7). Jesus, who had put on the form of a servant, whose appearance would not have attracted attention, yet was said by Isaiah to be the Power of God. Today, we see that not only was Jesus not desirable in appearance, he was despised and rejected.

### **First, he was rejected by his family:**

*Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind."*

#### **Mark 3:20-21**

*And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you."*

#### **Mark 3:31-32**

### **Second, he was rejected by his community:**

*Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household." And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them.*

#### **Mark 6:3-5**

### **Third, he was rejected by his followers:**

*And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.*

#### **John 6:65-66**

**Forth, he is rejected by all who refuse to believe in him.** Jesus has been and continues to be rejected by all who refuse to believe in him as Savior and Lord. Even we, as believers, once rejected Jesus in our unbelief. But Jesus, through the power of his Word and the work of the Holy Spirit brought us to himself. To God alone be the glory!

Isaiah also tells us in today's passage that Jesus bore our sicknesses and sorrows but we regarded him as stricken by God. While Isaiah is speaking specifically of those who were there at his crucifixion, he is also speaking to us. There was good reason for those who were at Jesus' crucifixion to believe he was cursed by God. The reason being the Law of Moses. Deuteronomy 21:22-23 explains why they would believe Jesus was cursed by God as He was "hanged on a tree." But Paul gives us an explanation why Jesus had to die this way:

*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"*

### **Galatians 3:13**

Because of our sins, Jesus became a curse for us so that the curse of our sins would be removed from us. The writer of Hebrews gives us a further explanation:

*Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

### **Hebrews 2:17-18**

***As you meditate on today's Scripture passage, give thanks to Jesus for taking our sins, our sickness, and our sorrows and relieving us of the burden and penalties of our sins. Ponder the reality that, even in the middle of this COVID-19 pandemic, Jesus brings us peace.***

### **FOR FURTHER STUDY:**

John 6;      Matthew 8:16-18;      1 Peter 2:24

Matthew 4:23-24;      Luke 4:16-30

## Day 3 | Wednesday

*But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

### Isaiah 53:5-6

Day three of our journey is a sobering one, focusing on our sin. Did you know that there are three types of sin? **The first type of sin is...sin.** Sin is any falling short of the glory of God. This definition covers every possible sin we can commit. **The second type is transgression.** Transgression is any violation of God's Law. Breaking any of the Ten Commandments is considered transgression. **The third type of sin is iniquity.** Iniquity is taking something God created for good and using it for evil.

Without Jesus, we “*were dead in our trespasses and sins*”(Ephesians 2:1). But Jesus was wounded for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. All of the punishments he endured in our place brought us peace because in our sins we were at war with God. The results of Jesus' wounds, the mutilating of his flesh, the piercing of the nails in his hands and feet, the spear in his side, and the spilling of his blood have healed us of the penalties of our sins.

The reason Jesus suffered was that we were the transgressors. **Jesus was crucified not for his sins – but for ours!**

*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*

### 1 Peter 2:24

And why do we sin? We sin because we are sinners. It's what sinners do. Isaiah compared us to sheep without a shepherd. We all want to go our own way and do our own thing. It is why sheep need a shepherd. Left to their own way, sheep would starve or be consumed by some predator. They are incapable of saving themselves. Sheep need a shepherd to survive.



Likewise, we need a shepherd/savior to save us from ourselves. **Jesus is our shepherd and he calls us to himself.** When we obey and come to him and he saves us from ourselves.

*For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

### **1 Peter 2:25**

Jesus saves us from ourselves because he offered himself to be the sacrifice for our sins in our place. The guilt of all our sins was transferred to Jesus. **God laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all.**

*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

### **2 Corinthians 5:21**

**For today, let us reflect on the fact that Jesus died for our sins, yours and mine. Jesus paid a debt we could not pay. As Paul said, “the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”(Romans 6:23). Without Jesus we would have remained dead in our trespasses and sins. Thank Jesus today for our free gift of eternal life in him.**

### **FOR FURTHER STUDY**

2 Corinthians 5

Psalm 23

Luke 15:1-7

John 10

## Day 4 | Thursday

*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?*

### Isaiah 53:7-8

On this fourth day of our journey we meet some of the people who were responsible for putting Jesus to death. It is a sordid cast of characters who had different motives for their part in the death of Jesus. **We begin introductions with the son of destruction:**

**Judas Iscariot** | Judas was one of the chosen twelve disciples. But he was “*the son of destruction...*” (John 17:12). Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. That was about thirty days wages in Jesus’ day. A paltry sum for the life of our Lord and King. Why did he do it? He was “*demon possessed.*” (Luke 22:3)

**The soldiers who accompanied Judas** | They were just doing their job.

**Annas** | Father-in-law of Caiaphas. Perhaps the most powerful member of the Council of Scribes and Pharisees. He was a senior leader and advisor to his son-in-law. He conducted the first interrogation of Jesus before sending Jesus to Caiaphas. His motivation was perhaps hatred of Jesus.

**Caiaphas** | The high priest. He was in-charge of Jesus’ interrogation and the leader of those who considered Jesus a blasphemer and troublemaker. John tells us, “*It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people*”(John 18:14). Caiaphas was afraid Jesus would start a rebellion against the Romans and wanted to maintain the “status quo.”

**The Council** | A group of Scribes and Pharisees also known as the Sanhedrin. They were the ruling body of the religious Jews. It is doubtful that all members of the Sanhedrin were present at Jesus’ trial since we know that some of them were



believers (Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea). They were acting with political motives in their efforts to rid themselves of their “Jesus” problem.

**Herod** | A descendant of Herod the Great, Herod was Tetrarch of Judea. A figurehead ruler put in place by the Romans. When Jesus was before Herod, Jesus never responded to Herod’s questions. He opened not his mouth. Herod’s desire was to be in Pilate’s good graces. After Herod sent Jesus to Pilate, Herod and Pilate became good friends.

**Pilate** | Roman ruler of Judea. Pilate was known by all for his ruthlessness and oppression. He was also in trouble with Rome for his vicious treatment of the Jews. It was with this knowledge that the Jews threatened to report Pilate to Rome as a traitor (John 19:12). It was this fear that caused Pilate to bind Jesus over for crucifixion rather than release him.

**Pilate’s Soldiers** | They were also following orders and doing their job. But they enjoyed the beating, the punishment, and the act of crucifying Jews.

**The Crowd** | The same people who the week before were proclaiming “Hosanna” as Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time, shouted “crucify him” to Pilate and called for the release of the criminal Barabbas instead of Jesus. They had become a mob, whipped up by members of the Council. They were like sheep who had gone astray. It is the nature of human nature.

**As you ponder this “cast of characters” who were instrumental in Jesus’ crucifixion, ask yourself if you resemble any, or all, of these people. You see, as sinners we are also responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus since it was for our sins, yours and mine, that he had to die for. Spend today thanking God for sending Jesus to die for our sins.**

## **FOR FURTHER STUDY**

Matthew 26:47 – 27:56

Luke 22:47 – 23:49

John 18:1 – 19:37

## Day 5 | Friday

*And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.*

### Isaiah 53:9-10

**Today is Good Friday.** It is day five of our journey and we find ourselves at the cross. Isaiah, in today's passage, takes us to the tomb first and then brings us back to the cross. We can forgive Isaiah for winding the road back and forth from the tomb back to the cross. After all, he was writing some 700 years before the event. We, however, should not be amazed at Isaiah's accuracy because he was writing under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit.

Why did Isaiah comment that they made Jesus' grave with the wicked and a rich man? It seems enigmatic but there is a good explanation. Many people that were present at the crucifixion thought Jesus was executed as a common criminal and – as such – would be buried as a common criminal in a mass grave. However, through the intervention of Joseph of Arimathea and the help of Nicodemus, Jesus was buried in a place of honor. His body was prepared like a rich man by wrapping the body in linen and the application of expensive perfumes. Jesus suffering on the behalf of sinners was complete and Isaiah's prophecy again proved true.

Now Isaiah takes us back to the cross. Jesus was crucified even though he was innocent. Jesus had done nothing wrong or uttered the least untruth. Yet they put him to death as a common criminal:

*And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.*

### Luke 23:33

*He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.*

### 1 Peter 2:22

*"Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him" (Isaiah 53:10).* This statement by Isaiah is as shocking as it is true. It forces us to realize it was the will of God for Jesus to hang on the cross. Before the foundation of the world, God made provision for the reconciliation of mankind unto himself. This provision was according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God:

*...this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.*

### **Acts 2:23**

Why did God wish to crush his own son? Remember this statement from Day One? We did this so that through him, we - as sinful creatures - would have a way back to the God who created us. And this was God's plan all along. It was not as if God had a plan and man made a mess of it and so God had to insert Jesus as plan "B". Jesus was God's plan all along. **God, from all eternity, never had one thought of you outside of Jesus. May we, in response, never have one thought of life outside of Jesus.**

It was God's plan all along that all who believe and have put their faith and trust in Jesus would come to life through Jesus' death. It is through the love of God we are:

*...and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.*

### **Romans 3:24-25**

*In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

### **1 John 4:10**

The prolonging of Jesus' days referred to by Isaiah means that even though Jesus would be put to death, there would be great multitudes of Jesus' spiritual children. Jesus, even though he died, would live again forever. The fulfillment of this prophecy extends from Jesus' time on earth but also to his (and ours) eternal life in heaven.

**As we close our time today, let us spend much time thanking the God of the universe for our salvation through the sacrifice of his son Jesus. May we thank Jesus for his enduring the suffering, pain, and death on our behalf. May we be cognizant of the fact that when Jesus was on the cross, we were on his mind.**

## **FOR FURTHER STUDY**

Matthew 27:57-61

Luke 23:50-56

John 19:38-41

## **Day 6 | Saturday**

*Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.*

### **Isaiah 53:11-12**

Today is Day six and we come to the end of I-53, the highway to the cross. Here we find that the end of the highway is not the end. It is the beginning of our glorious eternal life in Jesus. When God looked down at Jesus on the cross and saw the anguish of Jesus' soul God was satisfied. Our debt was paid in full. We poor wretched sinners could now put on the robe of Jesus's righteousness and stand before God as a child of the King.

*For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.*

### **Romans 5:19**

*And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

## **Philippians 2:8**

But this is still not the end. It is the beginning of eternal life in Jesus. You must see that, as important as Jesus' death on the cross is to believers, it is not all there is. There is more, and that more is the resurrection. If the cross was the end, if Jesus had not been resurrected, we would die sinless and that would be all. But it is not all. On the third day, Jesus was raised from the dead in victory over sin and death to eternal life and we, as his spiritual children, also have eternal life if we know him as Savior and Lord. Jesus lives eternal and so will we.

*And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*

## **John 17:3**

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."*

## **Romans 1:16-17**

So, Christ has saved us by paying our sin debt, given us eternal life by his resurrection and clothed us in his righteousness. The benefit of Jesus putting aside his deity and taking on the form of man and living a sinless life even though he was tempted in every way as we are is that we now have an advocate. Jesus now stands at the right hand of God and intercedes for us to God. The writers of the New Testament give us this good news:

*Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.*

## **Hebrews 7:25-26**

*Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*

## **Romans 8:34**

*My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.*

## **1 John 2:1-2**

Tomorrow we will celebrate the resurrection of our Savior, Jesus Christ. And this celebration will, because of the Covid-19 pandemic, be different from anything we have experienced. We will not be in church surrounded by other believers, many of whom are dressed in their Easter finery. We will be at home, separated from each other and even our families and we will watch Easter services online. **But this should not let us lose sight of what God has done and is doing through this pandemic.**

**We need to pray for God's will to be done in this time. We need to pray for our neighbors and make sure that they are not in need during this time. And, we need to pray that God will use this pandemic to call those that are lost to himself. May his will be done during this time. Amen.**

## **FOR FURTHER STUDY**

Matthew 28:1-10

Mark 16:1-11

Luke 24:1-12

John 20:1-18

Romans 5:12-21

Romans 8

1 John 2