

Palm Sunday marks the beginning of the final week of Jesus' life. Mark 11:1-11 describes the beginning of the week:

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage [beth-fa-je] and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, ² saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'"

⁴ They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, ⁵ some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" ⁶ They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. ⁷ When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. ⁹ Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

"Hosanna!^[a]"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"^[b]

¹⁰ "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"

"Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

¹¹ Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

Think about this...in less than a week, things went from cheers to jeers. The mob of revelers calling out to their King and waving Palm branches at the beginning of the week by Friday became a mob of killers screaming, "crucify, crucify."

Each of the Gospels describe the arrest, the questioning, and the subsequent persecution and suffering Jesus went through before giving up his last on the Cross. We'll be remembering and honoring that part of the story this Friday at our Good Friday Service. 4pm in Auditorium. I hope you will plan to be there.

Over the last three months we have been in this series in the book of Isaiah. The Prophet Isaiah, some 700 years before the first Easter happened, predicted the events of this coming week, right down to the whips and the welts in Isaiah 53. Isaiah describes who, what and why it all happened with incredible accuracy. Turn in your bibles to Isaiah 53

[Transition] - Isaiah begins the description with an important insight as to who this suffering servant was. Of course, we now know it was Jesus whom he was referring to but, the original audience would not have known. I want you to notice what he says about Jesus. [Read verses 1-3.]

Verses 1-3 - The suffering one was God but also a human.

The phrase "The arm of the Lord" here is also used in 51:9, and it is used to mean that God himself showed up to take care of business. This wasn't ambassador work. This wasn't assistant's work. God himself showed up for this work.

This suffering one was God and yet at the same time distinct from God... notice...he's described as a tender shoot...a root from dry ground...in other words a man, who had no beauty or majesty or anything in his appearance that would cause people to be attracted to him.

Isaiah is clear, any attraction to Jesus was not superficial. He wasn't a social media influencer, a fortune 500 leader, or a fashion Magazine cover model. In fact, he didn't look anything like what people expected God in flesh to look like. I'm sorry...the Chosen Jesus is way, way to handsome to be accurate. 😊 I mean that guy is magnetic. You just want to hug him and hang out with him. Makes great TV...but it's not the way it really was.

Being so plain, and nondescript, people did not recognize him as God. They couldn't conceive of the power of God in this humble-suffering-servant type. No one respected him, many despised him. Most rejected him and even shunned him.

[**Transition**] – Yet this unassuming servant of God came to do something totally amazing for the very ones who rejected him and turned their faces from him. Notice what he did. [Read verses 4-6.]

The reason Jesus suffered and died (Verses 4-6).

Ironically, when Jesus was crucified many who looked on interpreted this suffering as punishment coming directly from God for the sin Jesus committed.

They thought, "That'll teach him for calling himself God." They were blinded to fact that Jesus was taking on the suffering for the sins they had committed. Isaiah makes it clear, it wasn't because of anything Jesus had done...it was totally and completely about our sin that he "TOOK ON:"

- He took up OUR pain
- He bore OUR suffering
- He was pierced for OUR transgressions
- He was crushed for OUR iniquities
- God placed on him the iniquity of US ALL!

I want you to visualize the significance of these words.

In the Old Testament, the Day of Atonement was a very physical, communal or corporate ritual meant to deal with sin in a concrete way. It was the one day each year when the entire nation's sins were symbolically "cleared out." It was the one day each year when the High Priest was permitted to enter the most sacred room of the Tabernacle called the Holy of Holies to represent the people before God to restore their relationship together.

On the Day of Atonement:

- The High Priest washed and put on special simple linen garments.
- Before representing the people, he sacrificed a bull for his own sins and his household.
- He then entered the Most Holy Place with incense to create a cloud over the mercy seat. He then sprinkled blood from the sacrifice there. This was the only time all year anyone entered this space.
- Then two goats were brought to the High Priest.

The High priest would present the two goats before the Lord and the people. Then he would cast lots, (flip a coin) to determine which goat was to be sacrificed and its blood was spread on the Mercy Seat as an offering to the Lord for the sins of the people. (Mark leaves with first goat)

The second goat was kept alive to publicly demonstrate for the people what had gone on in private with the priest and the blood in the most holy place. They wanted the people to have a visual reminder burned into their minds and hearts. This goat was called the "Azazel" "Az:... goat..." "azel"...to go away. The practice is where we get the term "scape goat."

The priest would then lay both of his hands on the goat's head and confess over it all the wickedness, rebellion, and sins of the people of Israel. In this way, he transferred the people's sins to the head of the goat. Every lie you ever told. Every secret evil you ever harbored. Every deceitful thought you ever had. Every horrible decision you've made. Every indecent thing you've ever looked at. Every prideful attitude or action you ever displayed.

I want you to think in this moment...about the worst thing you've ever done. When you think of it...I want you to imagine it being transferred onto the scapegoat.

Verse six of our passage today says that the Lord laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all. Just as the priest laid his hands on the scapegoat and

symbolically put Israel's sins on it, so too ALL the sins of humankind (past, present, and future) were placed on Jesus. He took them on for real, not symbolically like the scapegoat; he literally experienced their consequence and their wage...death!

The wording of Isaiah verses 4-6 clearly point back to Lev 16:20-22; the placing of the sins of the people on the scapegoat and the Leviticus text says it "will carry on itself all their sins." The High Priest placing his hands on the goat symbolized the transfer of guilt from the people onto the scapegoat, and its complete removal from their midst, never to return. Once the priest had placed the sins of the people on the scapegoat, the goat was led out of the tabernacle, out of the city and into a remote, desolate region of wilderness, surely to be killed by wild animals.

This entire ritual was a dramatic and graphic portrayal of the forgiveness of sin. The sins of the people were completely removed from their midst. And when the goat had been taken out the priest removed his sacred garments at the entrance of the tabernacle and left them there. He then bathed his entire body, put on another set of garments, made one more sacrifice for himself and for the people and then the atonement ceremony was complete.

It's my understanding that when the priest sat down having completed the requirements of atonement the people would go berserk. They would erupt in celebration because they were psyched out of their minds with joy and gratitude. Because fresh awareness of freedom from the oppression of evil evokes an uncontrollable response of jubilation and joy. What a relief!!

[Transition] - **The result** of all this horror on the cross is... **our peace with God**...our broken relationship with God is now reconciled.

Now, I want to be sure you know that this total redemption was accomplished for us willingly by Jesus. The next couple of verses make it clear that Jesus willingly endured the suffering and punishment FOR us.

[Read verses 7-9]

Jesus willingly endured the suffering and punishment for us.

The wording of verse 7 literally says, "but he, for his part, submitted himself." So, when we say that God sent his one and only Son Jesus... don't make the mistake of thinking that Jesus came reluctantly or grudgingly.

He totally comprehended all that was going on and he willingly submitted to the suffering because of his great love for you. His silence was not the result of fear...it was not the result of being unaware of what was happening or being confused or bewildered...his silence was the result of a submitted and determined in mind and tongue. He knew full well what was coming and he said, "Bring it on!" He saw the sin of my heart and he said, "Bring it on!" He looked into your heart and saw everything going on in there and he said, "Bring it on!"

He endured the oppression of false trials absent of justice. He was literally "hacked off" from the land of the living. He endured blow after blow and submitted himself to all of this suffering and punishment even though it is made clear that he had no violence and no deceit...in other words, he was sinless. And that makes him the perfect substitute. He meets all the requirements for being a substitute for us...he was God, he was clearly without stain of sin, he identified with us in our need and he voluntarily stands in our place.

[Transition] - The good news is that his mission was accomplished. Verses 10-12 confirm it. The one who experienced death in verse 9 is now alive in verse 10. The condemned of verse 8 is now the righteous of verse 11. The helpless of verse 7 is now the victor of verse 12. I want you to see it with me. Read verses 10-12.

Jesus triumphs over death and is completely successful in his mission.

The servant's anguish was in every way the fulfillment of a great divine plan. Nothing was left undone. It was a final and decisive battle with evil and death. And Jesus executed the mission perfectly. And now he is exalted at the side of God the Father inviting you and I to trust in the work that he did for us on the cross.

Philippians 2 sums it up this way,

"... Jesus:

⁶*Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,*

⁷*but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.*

⁸*And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross!*

⁹*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,*

¹⁰*that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*

¹¹*and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father."*

Palm Sunday witnessed cheers...to jeers...but Easter will turn it back to Cheers forever!

Conclusion: All that Jesus accomplished is now available to every person who chooses to place their trust in Him:

- Cleansing from sin
- Removal of guilt
- Peace with God

These are all available to the one who places their trust in Jesus and begins a personal relationship with him.

What's more, the Bible promises that the person who connects with Jesus and follows him in this life, will follow him into the next life as well. Just as Jesus passed through death and into life as Isaiah 53:11 says, so too will those who follow him pass through death and into eternal life. Guaranteed!

[Illustration] - Actor Kevin Bacon tells the story of a time when his 6-year-old son first saw the movie *Foot/loose*, which as you know Bacon starred in:

He said, "Hey, Dad, you know that thing in the movie where you swing from the rafters of that building? That's really cool, how did you do that?"

I said, "Well, I didn't do that part--it was a stunt man."

"What's a stunt man?" he asked.

"That's someone who dresses like me and does things I can't do."

"Oh," he replied and walked out of the room looking a little confused.

A little later he said, "Hey, Dad, you know that thing in the movie where you spin around on that gym bar and land on your feet? How did you do that?"

I said, "Well, I didn't do that. It was a gymnastics double."

"What's a gymnastics double?" he asked.

"That's a guy who dresses in my clothes and does things I can't do."

There was silence from my son, then he asked in a concerned voice, "Dad, what did you do?"

"I got all the glory," I sheepishly replied.

You see, that's the grace of God in our lives. Jesus took our sin upon himself and did what we couldn't do. And we stand forgiven and bask triumphant in Jesus' glory. ¹

¹ Joel Sarrault in *Fresh Illustrations for Preaching & Teaching* (Baker), from the editors of *Leadership*.

The Bible is clear:

- Jesus died for you!
- It was for your sin that he suffered!
- He endured the agony for sin that was yours to bear.
- He did it for you. His life for your life.
- He longs to bring to your life all the blessing that has been made possible through his death and resurrection.

But you must come to him and tell him that you need him and that you want him in your life. He will not barge into your life. Instead, he waits until you open the door of your heart so that he can come in.

If you want to open the door of your heart to Jesus and begin a personal relationship with him pray something like this:

*Lord Jesus, I have understood today you suffered and died for me and my sin. Thank you for dying on the cross for me.
I want to know you personally. I open the door of my life and receive you as my Forgiver and Leader. Thank you for forgiving me of my sins and giving me eternal life. Today I choose to follow your leadership in my life.
Make me the kind of person you want me to be.*