

A Homecoming Like No Other

Isaiah 53:1-3

I. Introduction: Setting Your Eyes on Jesus

1. Love, grace, and peace from our Heavenly Father and the Lord, Jesus Christ as we remember and celebrate the Passion Week of our Lord. *This was the week when the fulness of His purpose in becoming man was to be realized...the week He took on the Father's wrath for you and me...the week He defeated death that we may have life.*

I pray that today, we like He, count the cost, believe His message, and welcome Him into our hearts.

2. In Isaiah 53, written 700-740 BC, we are presented with the Gospel message and it's in the first 3 verses that we witness Jesus homecoming, a homecoming like no other. *As we look deeper at Isaiah 53:1-3, I think it helpful to see the overall context.*

- A. Let's first go to **Isaiah 52:13-15**. It is in these verses we have the message of what to believe or not believe...*Jesus, the Son of God, came to cleanse our world of unrighteousness.*

¹³ Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently;
He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.
¹⁴ Just as many were astonished at you,
So His visage was marred more than any man,
And His form more than the sons of men;
¹⁵ So shall He sprinkle many nations.
Kings shall shut their mouths at Him;
For what had not been told them they shall see,
And what they had not heard they shall consider.
- Isaiah 52:13-15

As we read this it is good to ask if v15 will be “my” destiny?! Just who do I say Jesus is?

Slide 6-9

B. Next, a brief outline of chapter 53 reveals the grand narrative of the Passion Week:

The Revelation of the Servant	Is 53:1-3
He Bore the Suffering for Mankind’s Offenses Toward God	Is 53:4-6
The Innocent Servant Willingly Died for Mankind	Is 53:7-9
The Victory of the Righteous Servant	Is 53:10-12

C. Finally, the first 3 verses in Isaiah 53 are the focus of our teaching this Palm Sunday...[marking Jesus victorious entry in Jerusalem as prophesied in Zechariah 9:9](#). Some of you may have wandered down the Via Dolorosa and be able to picture the crowds laying down branches [and clothing in great fanfare as they welcomed the prophet Jesus just before rejecting the Messiah, Jesus](#).

3. Before we get into our passage, I have a little story about two kids playing in the snow that I have adapted for our purposes today.¹

Two children were playing in the pollen one hot day; [when one said to the other, “Let us see who can make the straightest path to the spring under that tree \(for our purposes, this was the tree of life\) through all this pollen.”](#)

One child fixed his eyes on the tree, and walked along without taking his eyes off its budding leaves and was soon drinking the refreshing waters of the spring.

The other child set her eyes on the tree also, and, after going a short distance, she heard voices and turned to see who was there before

¹ Adapted from *Heartwarming Bible Illustrations*, Richard Steele, <https://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/making-a-straight-path-in-the-snow>

launching for the tree once again. A few steps further and she again heard voices, so she turned and this time others were beckoning her to follow them to the playground. After once again launching for the tree, she heard a rustling nearby. Yet, she stayed intent on the tree this time until she heard and then felt some pollen balls (these are like snowballs) whistling by while some hit and stung her. So, she stopped and began to fire pollen balls back at her assailant. After a bit, she noticed the tree was fading into the darkness of dusk so she again made for the tree.

By the time she arrived at the tree all tired and thirsty AND the two of them looked back to where they had started, the street lights had come on. What they saw was that one path was true as an arrow, while the other ran in a haphazard zigzag course.

“How did you get your path so true?” asked the child who had made the crooked steps.

“Why,” said the other child, “I just set my eyes on the tree, and kept them there until I got to the end; while you kept stopping, looking around, and wandering off course.”

You see, our passage today is much like this story...Isaiah's first question is about our path. “Who has believed our report” could be rephrased to who has believed AND therefore made their way to the living water, Jesus?

Slide 11

II. **Isaiah 53:1: Believing the Report or Not?**

1. From the earliest chapters of Genesis, the OT is full of prophecies revealing the coming Messiah. Through story after story we are presented with mankind's desperate need for a Savior. Through story after story we are presented with (1) the worlds rejection of the God of the Bible and His message and (2) Israel's repeated cries for, blessings, and rejection of Him.
2. Who has believed our report, our testimony, our message of God and His sovereign power? You see in this question, there are really two – the who and the what....Who can possibly believe the

heavenly things which must be believed to believe the prophecies found in **Isaiah 52:13-15**.

3. We know, until this day, the Jews have rejected both the prophecies and the arm or power of Jesus in their own holy book.
 - A. Isaiah himself repeatedly noted their spiritual poverty and ignorance in rejecting the prophecies of Messiah's future coming (**Isaiah 6:9-19; 7:9; 29:9-10; 42:18-19; 43:8; 48:4-8**). As the Apostle Mark reports in **Mark 6:1-4**, many of his own family, his friends, and neighbors were offended by and rejected Him at His homecoming;
 - B. Great stories of God's strength in action show His efforts to reveal Himself and Israel's blindness (sometimes complete blindness and other times partial blindness). Passages we find in **Exodus** bringing them out of enslavement in Egypt, in **Isaiah 48** redeeming them from Babylon, and so many others speaking of His reigning in strength with beauty, joy, and so much more.
 - i. What's more, the New testament is filled with signs and wonders, God-anointed spiritual wisdom and insight, fulfillment of a multitude of prophecies, and the miracle of the empty tomb all unequivocally demonstrating Jesus is Messiah.
4. Outside of Christianity, we know every other world religion has also rejected the God of the Bible. We also know that even under the headings of "Judaism & Christianity", a good many have remade the God of the Bible into their own image by picking and choosing what they will accept, modify, or outright reject from His word. A good many have made a profession of Christ, yet history testifies and prophecy says there will be a great falling away (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3)
5. On this side of the cross, we scan the ages and see the prophesying of His coming was again and again and again:

- The Father said, “He’s coming.” (Genesis 3:15)
- Moses said, “He’s coming.” (Deuteronomy 18:15-19)
- David said, “He’s coming.” (Psalm 22)
- Isaiah said, “He’s coming.” (Isaiah 7:14 and many others)
- Jeremiah said, “He’s coming.” (Jeremiah 30:9 and many others)
- Daniel said, “He’s coming.” (Daniel 7:13-14 and many others)
- Micah said, “He’s coming.” (Micah 5:2)
- Zechariah said, “He’s coming.” (Zechariah 9:9)
- Malachi said, “He’s coming.” (Malachi 3:1)

Yet, as we have said, His origins and His power have been brought into question.

Slide 13

III. **Isaiah 53:2: Unrecognizable to Most**

1. Here in verse 2, many hearing the report will reject His appearance. *The tender plant and root offer the religious leaders and people* a reference to Jesus kingly Davidic line referenced in verses like **Isaiah 4:2, Jeremiah 23:5, and Zechariah 3:8.**

While being careful to not press the metaphor to far, we see life in the “tender plant” and lifelessness of “dry ground” with respect to Israel believing the report and the astonishing things of the Lord.

2. In the balance of the verse, we are reminded that Israel expected the Messiah to be a conquering King throwing off their bondage to Rome. *Yet, the king spoken of here in Isaiah had a non-descript outward appearance – no signs of royalty, majesty, beauty, splendor, or stateliness.* He was to be unimpressive and, therefore, easy to miss if they simply looked at His outward appearance.
3. Messiah was coming as one of them. *He was coming, not as a conquering king removing the hard things of everyday life in (America...I mean under the Romans), but for their wandering souls.*

IV. **Isaiah 53:3**: Rejection's Sorrow

1. Because the Messiah would not fit their preconceived notions, they would reject Him. Sometimes rejection equates with ignoring or simply sidelining the offender. Yet, this nondescript person of verse 2 so inflamed them that they would despise or scorn Him!

For you see, this is what holiness and righteousness do...holiness and righteousness demand we make a choice...holiness and righteousness demand we declare who or what has authority in our lives. Jesus is the essence and source of holiness and righteousness and everyone's life is ultimately an accounting to Him.

2. You see, Jesus knew what was in store as he rode that donkey into Jerusalem. It had all been prophesied and He was fulfilling every prophecy, one after the other. The people had shown again and again that they wanted the healing without the healer and the miracles without the miracle-giver – they did not esteem or value Him, but rather what He could do for them. Even His own disciples were struggling to understand what Scripture spoke of and was unfolding before their very eyes.
3. In **John 1:6-8**, John the Baptist changed the language from “He’s coming” to “He is arrived”.
4. In **John 1:11**, the Apostle John announces the fulfillment of what we have read here in Isaiah today. “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.” It was prophesied and it actually happened. They were told and they either knew or could of known.

V. Closing

1. You and are blessed to be on the other side of the cross...we are blessed to have the completed canon of Scripture. With both of these in mind, I want to close with one thought from two perspectives:

A. First, Scripture has prophetically revealed the coming Messiah and history testifies that the man, Jesus Christ, is Messiah. [God incarnate...wow!](#) Jesus Christ rode down the Via Dolorosa all the way to the cross Pilate and the Jews, along with you & I, put Him on; [all that we may believe this report and be reconciled to Him in new life.](#)

B. Second, the fulfillment of the words in Isaiah are a very great warning to us. [We ignore, despise, and reject Him at our peril. He is the One with all power and all authority.](#) Is their moist, fertile ground in our hearts for Him to save and sanctify our souls that we may fulfill His command to be holy as He is holy.

So, consider yourself encouraged, exhorted, and commanded to have your heart be Jesus' home.

[Prayer]

Isaiah 53:1-3

A Homecoming Like No Other

I. Introduction: Setting Your Eyes on Jesus

Additional Scriptures Referenced: Is 52:13-15, Zech 9:9

II. Isaiah 53:1: Believing the Report or Not

- He's coming...prophecy after prophecy fulfilled
- Prophecy Given, Power on Display...Rejecting Jesus seems foolhardy

Additional Scriptures Referenced: Isaiah 6:9-19; 7:9; 29:9-10; 42:18-19; 43:8; 48:4-8; Mk 6:1-4; Exodus 12; Is 48, 2 Thes 2:1-3; Gen 3:15; Deut 18:15-19; Ps 22; Is 7:14; Jer 30:9; Dan 7:13=14; Micah 5:2; Zech 9:9; Mal 3:1

III. Isaiah 53:2: Unrecognizable to Most

- Jesus is NOTHING like man. If there is any similarities, it is because man – while fallen – still carries some of God's holiness as we were made in His image.

Additional Scriptures Referenced: Is 4:2; Jer 23:5; Zech 3:8

IV. Isaiah 53:3: Rejection's Sorrow

- The demands of holiness and righteousness...choices and authority.

Additional Scriptures Referenced: 1 Jn 1:6-8; Jn 1:11

V. Closing

- Jesus has all power and all authority...will you believe and respond to the report?

5-Day Devotional

Isaiah 53:1-3

A Homecoming Like No Other

Day 1: The Promised Messiah

Reading: Is 52:13-53:3

Devotional: As we begin this journey, we reflect on the prophetic words of Isaiah, written centuries before Jesus' birth. These verses paint a picture of the coming Messiah - not as a conquering king, but as a humble servant. How often do we, like the Israelites, create our own expectations of how God should work in our lives?

Today, let's open our hearts to see God's plan unfold in unexpected ways. Consider areas in your life where you might be resisting God's will because it doesn't align with your expectations. Pray for the wisdom to recognize God's hand at work, even when it doesn't match your preconceptions.

Day 2: The Arm of the Lord Revealed

Reading: Jn 1:1-14

Devotional: John's gospel introduces Jesus as the Word made flesh, the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. The "arm of the Lord" that Isaiah spoke of is now revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Despite His divine nature, Jesus came in humility, often unrecognized by those He came to save. Reflect on times when you may have overlooked God's presence in your life. How might you cultivate a greater awareness of His work around you?

Today, practice intentional mindfulness of God's presence, looking for His "arm" at work in both the extraordinary and the mundane aspects of your day.

Day 3: Rejected and Despised

Reading: Mk 6:1-6

Devotional: Jesus' homecoming in Nazareth mirrors Isaiah's prophecy of the Messiah being despised and rejected. Even those who knew Him best failed to recognize His true identity. This passage reminds us that familiarity can sometimes blind us to the divine. In your own spiritual journey, have you ever become too comfortable, missing the awe and wonder of God's presence?

Take time today to approach your faith with fresh eyes. Ask God to reveal Himself to you in new ways, breaking through any complacency that may have settled in your heart.

Day 4: The Way to the Tree of Life**Reading: Jn 14:1-6**

Devotional: Recall the story from the sermon about the children finding their way to the tree. Jesus declares Himself as the Way, the Truth, and the Life - our direct path to the Father. Like the child who kept their eyes fixed on the goal, we're called to keep our focus on Christ amidst life's distractions.

What "pollen balls" in your life are diverting your attention from Jesus? Identify these distractions and commit them to prayer. Practice fixing your eyes on Jesus today through intentional moments of prayer and meditation on His Word.

Day 5: A Homecoming Like No Other**Reading: Lk 19:28-44**

Devotional: As we conclude our week, we witness Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem - a bittersweet homecoming. He enters as a humble king, knowing the rejection and suffering that await Him. Yet, He proceeds out of love for us.

This Palm Sunday scene invites us to examine our own hearts. How do we welcome Jesus into our lives? Are we like the crowd, quick to praise when things are good but fickle in our devotion? Or do we, like Jesus, remain faithful to God's call even when the path leads through suffering?

Today, recommit your heart as Christ's home. Invite Him into every aspect of your life, pledging to follow Him faithfully, come what may.

Small Group Study Guide

Isaiah 53:1-3

A Homecoming Like No Other

Opening Prayer: Begin your session with a prayer, asking God to open your hearts and minds to His Word and to guide your discussion.

Key Takeaways: Query the group for takeaways first...you may stay with one or more of those.

1. Isaiah 53 presents the Gospel message and Jesus' homecoming 700-740 years before His birth.
2. The passage highlights the tension between Jesus' divine purpose and human rejection.
3. Our response to Jesus determines our spiritual path and relationship with God.

Discussion Questions: Did the Holy Spirit prompt any questions with you? Start with those.

1. The sermon begins with the story of two children making paths in the pollen. How does this story relate to our spiritual journey and our focus on Jesus?
2. Isaiah asks, "Who has believed our report?" Reflect on your own faith journey. What aspects of Jesus' message have been easiest and most challenging for you to believe?
3. The sermon mentions that many people, including Jesus' own family and neighbors, rejected Him. Why do you think it's sometimes difficult for those closest to us to accept our faith?
4. How does Isaiah's description of Jesus as a "tender plant" and having no "beauty that we should desire Him" challenge our expectations of what a Savior should look like?
5. The sermon states that "holiness and righteousness demand we make a choice." How have you experienced this in your own life? What choices have you had to make because of your faith?
6. Discuss the difference between wanting "the healing without the healer and the miracles without the miracle-giver." How might this attitude manifest in modern Christianity?

Practical Applications: Query the group for applications first...you may explore one or more of those.

1. Self-reflection: Take time this week to examine your own "path" to Jesus. Are there areas where you've wandered off course? How can you refocus on Him?
2. Scripture study: Read through some of the Old Testament prophecies mentioned in the sermon (e.g., Genesis 3:15, Deuteronomy 18:15-19). Reflect on how these point to Jesus.
3. Outreach: Consider someone in your life who may be struggling to "believe the report" about Jesus. Pray for them daily and look for opportunities to share your faith.
4. Heart check: The sermon concludes by encouraging us to make our hearts Jesus' home. What practical steps can you take to invite Jesus more fully into your daily life?

Closing Prayer: Closing Prayer: End the session by praying for each other, asking God to help you apply the lessons learned and to deepen your relationship with Jesus.

Discussion Questions
Isaiah 53:1-3
A Homecoming Like No Other

1. How might our preconceived notions of what a Messiah should look like or do hinder our ability to recognize and accept Jesus in our lives today?
2. How might our preconceived notions of what a Messiah should look like or do hinder our ability to recognize and accept Jesus in our lives today?
3. How does the image of Jesus as a 'tender plant' in 'dry ground' challenge our understanding of strength, power, and divine intervention?
4. Reflecting on the story of the two children in the pollen, what are some 'distractions' in our lives that keep us from maintaining a straight path to Jesus?
5. How might the concept of Jesus's homecoming being 'like no other' apply to our own spiritual journeys and moments of encountering Christ?
6. In what ways do we, as individuals or as a church, sometimes 'remake the God of the Bible into our own image' by selectively accepting or rejecting parts of Scripture?
7. How can we cultivate 'moist, fertile ground in our hearts' for Jesus to work in our lives, especially when facing spiritual dryness or doubt?
8. Considering the numerous prophecies about the Messiah, how might this accumulated evidence strengthen our faith and help us share it with others?
9. In what ways does Jesus's willingness to be 'despised and rejected' for our sake challenge our own approach to sacrifice and service in our faith?
10. How can we balance the tension between recognizing Jesus's divine power and authority while also embracing His humble, 'nondescript' appearance as described in Isaiah?

Dinner Conversation Starters

Isaiah 53:1-3

A Homecoming Like No Other

1. Understanding Prophecy

The sermon mentions how Old Testament prophets like Isaiah predicted the coming of Jesus. What are some ways we can see these prophecies coming to life in the life of Jesus, and how does that strengthen our faith?

2. Pathways to Faith

Reflect on the story of the two children walking different paths to the tree of life." How can we ensure that we're keeping our "eyes on the tree" in our daily lives, and what distractions might we need to overcome?

3. Jesus' Appearance

Isaiah 53:2 describes Jesus' humble appearance, which many rejected. Why do you think people often judge based on appearances, and how can we learn to see beyond the surface to understand someone's true nature?

4. Rejection and Acceptance

The sermon highlights that many people rejected Jesus because He didn't fit their expectations. Can you think of a time when you might have rejected a truth because it didn't meet your expectations? How can we stay open to unexpected truths?

5. Personal Homecoming

How can we make our own hearts a home for Jesus as described in the sermon? What practical steps can we take as a family to welcome and honor Him in our daily lives?

Family Conversation Guide for Children & Early Teens

Isaiah 53:1-3

A Homecoming Like No Other

1. Understanding Prophecy and Faith

Parent: "Did you know the Bible talked about Jesus coming way before He was born?"

Child: "Really? How?"

Parent: "Prophets like Isaiah told people about Him hundreds of years earlier. It's like a special message from God."

Activity: Together, draw a picture of one of these messages, like a Christmas scene with prophets smiling because they knew Jesus was coming.

2. Walking the Right Path

Parent: "Remember the story we heard about the two children walking to the 'tree of life'? One stayed focused and the other got distracted."

Child: "Yes, one got to the tree quicker!"

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Parent: "Exactly! What's something you really want to focus on this week? How can I help you avoid distractions?"

Activity: Create a "focus tree" on paper where your child can write or draw their goals for the week.

3. Seeing Beyond Appearances

Parent: "Did you know Jesus didn't look like a king? People thought He would look special, but He was just like us."

Child: "Why does that matter?"

Parent: "It shows us that it's important to look at what's inside a person, not just the outside. Can you think of a time when you discovered someone was special after getting to know them?"

Activity: Play the "Invisible Crown" game, where you each share something special about the other that isn't visible.

4. Embracing Unexpected Truths

Parent: "Some people missed out on knowing Jesus because He wasn't what they expected. Have you ever been surprised by something good that didn't look special at first?"

Child: "Like when that plain-looking book turned out to be the best story!"

Parent: "Exactly! How can we be open to surprises in our life?"

Activity: Plan a "surprise day" where you do something unplanned or try something new together.

5. Making Our Hearts a Home for Jesus

Parent: "How can we make sure our hearts are a cozy home for Jesus?"

Child: "Maybe by talking to Him and being nice to others?"

Parent: "Yes! What's something kind we can do as a family this week to show His love?"

Activity: Create a "heart home" collage with actions that make Jesus feel welcomed in your hearts, like prayer, kindness, and gratitude.

This guide aims to create meaningful discussions and activities that help children grasp the core messages of the sermon in a relatable and engaging way.

Tips for Parents

- Be patient and listen: Give your child time to think and respond.
- Relate to everyday life: Use real-life examples and stories familiar to your child to make abstract concepts more tangible.
- Encourage questions: Let your child know it's okay to ask questions, even if things don't make sense right away.
- Share personal insights: Tell a personal story about a time you experienced these themes, adapting as needed for age appropriateness.

Family Conversation Guide for Older Teens

Isaiah 53:1-3

A Homecoming Like No Other

1. In School: Staying Focused

Scenario: While studying for exams or working on a project, distractions like social media and peer activities can pull you away.

Application: Like the child in the story who kept their eyes on the tree, set clear goals and reminders for yourself. Use apps or tools that limit distractions and schedule focused study times, maintaining your eyes on what truly matters for your future.

2. In Relationships: Looking Beyond Appearances

Scenario: Social circles often judge based on someone's appearance or popularity.

Application: Reflect on how Jesus was often overlooked because He didn't fit the expected image. Challenge yourself to get to know individuals for who they are inside. Initiate conversations with classmates who seem different or are often left out.

3. Digital Spaces: Valuing Integrity Over Image

Scenario: The pressure to present a perfect life on social media can be overwhelming.

Application: Remember the humility of Jesus' presence and focus on authenticity. Share genuine stories and experiences that reflect your true self rather than just curated highlights. Promote content that uplifts and encourages others.

4. Facing Rejection: Staying True to Your Beliefs

Scenario: You may feel pressured to conform to popular opinions or behaviors that go against your values.

Application: Jesus was rejected because He didn't fit expectations, yet He stayed true to His mission. Stand firm in your beliefs even when they are not popular. Seek friends who respect and support your values, and be a source of encouragement to those who might also feel out of place.

5. Making Your Heart a Home for Jesus Through Online Interactions

Scenario: Online interactions can sometimes become toxic or distracting from what truly matters.

Application: Before posting or engaging in conversations online, ask yourself if these actions create a positive environment and reflect Jesus' love. Use digital platforms to spread kindness, connect meaningfully, and support causes that align with your faith and values.

By applying these sermon principles to everyday situations, Gen Z can navigate their environments with intention, authenticity, and a steadfast focus on meaningful goals.

Tips for Parents and Older Teens:

- Reflect regularly: Consider writing a journal to process experiences and see how these principles apply in hindsight.
- Seek support: Connect with peers or mentors who share your values and can provide guidance in tough times.
- Stay grounded: Invest time in activities that reinforce your identity and values, whether through faith-based practices, community service, or creative pursuits.