

Isaiah 53:1-6 (Acts 8)

"The Servant's Suffering"

Isaiah 53 brings into view the vicarious suffering of *our* Savior, *God's* Servant, J.C. - & We know that Jesus is the suffering Servant in view because over & over throughout the N.T. this Ch is quoted *from* & applied *to* Jesus... You're in Acts Ch 8, turn your attention to the 26th Vs.

Vs 26-35

What a wonderful working knowledge of the word of God Philip had. To begin right where a man is reading & from there, lead him to J.C. But ladies & gentlemen, that's the primary point of the word of God. To lead us to J.C. Who was God's sacrifice for the sin of the world. For surely, the blood of bulls & goats could never take away the sins of mankind. The sacrificial system of the O.T. was put in place to make a *covering* for sin, but it could never truly *cleanse* mankind of sin. It was a foreshadowing of what would be fulfilled in the sacrifice & shed blood of J.C.

As we read in the book of Hebrews, "*Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: 'Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come— In the volume of the book it is written of Me— To do Your will, O God.'*"¹ What "will" is He referring to? The will of God to be the substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of the world. "In burnt offerings & sacrifices for sin You had no *pleasure*." However, when we get to the 10th Vs of Isaiah 53 what do we read? "*Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul (His life) an offering for sin...*"² It wasn't the constant blood flow of bulls & goats that pleased God, but the once for all sacrifice for sin, willingly made by His own Son, J.C. & surely that's what we see in Isaiah 53

In fact, we find both the suffering & the satisfaction of God's Servant in this section of scripture. The 1st 9 Vs speaking of His *suffering*, the last 3 Vs highlighting His *satisfaction*. It's a common thread that's woven throughout scripture & it's always in that order but sometimes shown through different examples. But the takeaway is this, there are no shortcuts in fulfilling God's plan & entering into His reward.

You'll hear phrases like, "from trial to triumph", "the flower follows the rain", "the cross before the crown".

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Heb 10:5-7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Is 53:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

So, if you're going through times of tribulation, it's the "rain season" in your life. The "heat" is on, you're in the "fiery furnace". You're in good company. If God leads you *to it*, He'll lead you *through it* & *satisfaction* awaits you on the other side. The Psalmist said it this way, *"Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning."*³

Vs1-3

We spent some time on Vs 1 last week. So rather than repeat what we've learned, let's consider the contrast between the "arm of the Lord" (which is a showing of strength & power) & the "tender plant" & "a root out of dry ground" (which is an image of humiliation & weakness).

& There are a few things we can pick up on out of what we're reading here. The prophet is revealing to us is that when the Messiah would be born to this world, it wouldn't be under any particularly impressive circumstances. Jesus wouldn't be born in a palace of a world empire w/all the luxuries afforded to a person of royalty. In fact, at the time Jesus was born, the Davidic dynasty had essentially been cut off. *Meaning they were no longer princes, they were peasants. Israel wasn't flourishing spiritually (God hadn't spoken to them in some 400 yrs). They weren't flourishing militarily, or economically or politically... They were being held under the oppressive "iron boot" of Rome.*

We also pick up on some details of the Messiah's humanity... Isaiah has already made mention (Ch 9) of the fact that He would be both, God & Man. "For unto us a Child is born" (humanity) "& unto us a Son is given" (deity). The Son of God would be born into this world through the virgin Mary. Fully God, fully Man.

But this Man, the Messiah, "He has no form or comeliness; & when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." Meaning, there was nothing obvious about His Person that would cause you to gravitate toward Him like, "He's the One we've been waiting for!"

Maybe you remember Israel's 1st king, Saul. He stood head & shoulders above everyone else, he was a good looking man, just had the "presence" of king. So the people were drawn to him, wanted him to represent them! That wasn't who Jesus was.

Now, that's not to say that He wasn't physically fit. It's not to say that He was below average in appearance. It's to say that He (by design) wasn't some hulking, handsome, hunk of a Man. There wasn't a radiance about Him, He wasn't what one would envision about a Messiah. Standing taller, obviously stronger & surpassing any other man in appearance.

³ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Ps 30:5]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

If you remember right, when they went to *arrest* Jesus, Judas had to *point Him out* so that they were sure they got the right Guy. Judas didn't say, "Look for the tall, hulking, handsome man that has a slight, distinguishing glow around Him." – He appeared so plainly ordinary that they couldn't pick Him out of a line up.

His words & His works attracted *multitudes*. *Physically* speaking, He looked like an ordinary Jewish man of that day. He would've never been in the running for Hollywood's sexiest man alive, award. ☺ This is why Isaiah likens Him to a "tender plant" rather than a "mighty oak". Not because He lacked in power, He's the God of the universe. But because He was humble & meek (not weak) but meek. He had no desire, no reason to present Himself as "all that". He *was all that* but had no need to prove anything to anyone.

But *what I want you to take heart in here today is the fact that out of "dry ground" God brought forth something beautiful, something incredible, something beyond our ability to comprehend. His Son, our Savior, & the salvation of the world.

Perhaps you feel like your whole life (right now) is a barren wasteland of "dry ground". You should know that you're in a prime place for God to do a wonderful work. (It's almost like a theme is developing, the cross before the crown, suffering before satisfaction...) We serve a God who specializes in bringing life out of the barren. "A root out of dry ground." 🌱

But again, for the sake of context let's remember. Vs 1 points to the strong arm of God's salvation. Vs 2 begins to give us revelation/illumination. It's the counterintuitive way that God works. He would bring the strength of His *salvation* through what would appear to be weakness & humiliation. A Man, beaten, bloodied, nailed to a cross & left there to die. How does that work? It's not the instinctive, or natural way we would reason. We just don't think that way... But God's thoughts are not our thoughts, are they? His ways, aren't our ways.

I brought it up last week, it's worth repeating. "For the message of the cross is *foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.'*"⁴ God turns the reasoning, the wisdom of the world upon its head w/the message of the cross. He's made *foolish* the wisdom of this world... Paul continues in 1st Corinthians saying that it's actually the wisdom of *God* to forbid that man should know Him through *worldly* wisdom.

⁴ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (1 Co 1:18–19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

God's not going to give bragging rights to anyone saying that they somehow of their own initiative, their own meditation & contemplation (through the wisdom of the sage) figured out salvation. But rather it would please God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who *believe*. He said, *"For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."*⁵ Bringing the strength of His salvation through apparent weakness & humiliation...

Vs 3

Not only would the Christ *not be desired* (Vs 2) He *would be despised* (Vs 3). 2xs in Vs 3 we read that He is "despised & rejected" by men. He was "despised" & not esteemed. Meaning, He *wouldn't be* respected, He *would be* rejected. John said that like this, *"He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him."*⁶

Now, there are undoubtedly a number of ways one could lean into this text. But the pattern that I seem to be picking up on (for our time today) is that the Lord would have us to know that He understands our sorrows, He understands your suffering. He knows what it means to not only *not be* respected, but to be completely *rejected*. He is (our word is) "acquainted" *with* (that is, has an experiential understanding of) grief.

There is not a place of pain, physically or emotionally that Jesus is not intimately familiar with. He understands what you're going through. & This is one reason (of several) that we should be eager to come *to* Him, to pour our hearts out *before* Him. Because He understands where you're at. & There's just something about speaking to someone who's been where you're at. There's a depth there, a kinship that you don't really get any other way.

*Now, I need to digress here for just a moment. Because there's a campaign out there that's gaining popularity called, "He get us." What *they're saying*, is not what *I'm saying*. They are a group of people, some of whom believe, some of whom don't. They call themselves a "diverse group of Jesus fans & followers" w/a "variety of faith journeys" w/a common desire to share the story of Jesus' life in a "new way". – I have no desire to share the story of Jesus in a "new way". There's nothing new under the sun.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Co 1:22–24). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jn 1:10–11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Yes, Jesus taught love. But He also taught holiness/righteousness. He said, “Don’t think that I came to bring peace on earth. I didn’t come to bring peace but a sword.” (Matt 10:34) He recognized that His message was by nature divisive & that people needed to make a choice, to receive Him or reject Him. To stand w/Him & for Him or against Him.

He didn’t come to affirm people in their sin or say it’s ok to lead a lifestyle *bound* by sin. He came to deliver us *from* our sin. They aren’t really representing Jesus so much as they are re-presenting Jesus. Seeking to make Him more appealing to the world.

When I say that Jesus understands. I’m saying, He knows what you’re going through. He’s familiar w/your pain & desires to bring healing & hope to your heart/life. The author of Hebrews put it this way, *“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*⁷ *

“He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.” No. We did not “esteem” (respect or regard) Him, we *crucified* Him. **We learned last week of the brutal beating that He endured. That when they were finished w/Him, He was virtually unrecognizable as a Man. That you would be so startled, so stunned at His appearance that your natural tendency would be to look away. That’s what Isaiah is referring to here when he says, “And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him;”**

& As one reads this, it leaves the reader w/the question, “Why? Why did this happen to Him, what was the meaning behind the depths of His suffering?”

Vs 4-6

Ladies and Gentlemen: Not only are we in the *heart* of the *passage*, but this *passage* presents the *heart* of the *Gospel*! I’m not sure that the picture of a substitutionary sacrifice could be more plainly put! The Holy Spirit through the prophet Isaiah inserts plural pronouns & the principle of substitutionary sacrifice along w/the categoric scope & the sufficiency of His work some 12 times throughout these 3 Vs! This is the innocent dying on behalf of the guilty, the just for the unjust!

This Servant (our Savior) wouldn’t die because of what *He* had done, but because of what *we* had done! “*Our* transgressions”, “*our* iniquities”, “*we* have gone astray”, “*we* have turned, *every one*, to his own way...”

⁷ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Heb 4:15-16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

“Surely He has borne our griefs, & carried our sorrows...” Now, this isn’t a reference to the fact that the Messiah would take our guilt & God’s wrath upon Himself. Isaiah is getting to that.

This is still leaning into the principle that Jesus understands our pain. He made our miseries, our infirmities His own, He carried our sorrows, our griefs as if they were His. Think of a beast of burden (a pack mule, something you’ve seen before) loaded up w/heaviness so that someone else wouldn’t have to bear the burden. The image here is that Jesus loaded up our burdens, our griefs & our sorrows & carried them on *His* back, so that we wouldn’t have to.

It recalls 1 Peter 5:7, * “...casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”⁸ The Lord would have us to cast all our cares, all our worries, all our anxieties upon Him. He’s already bore them for you, He loves you, He cares *for* you... How many times we carry around the weight of worry, of depression & anxiety, when He’s already carried them for us! He’s taken the weight of those things upon Himself! But have to learn how (through faith) to release them to Him, to trust in Him. “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”⁹ (May God help us).*

But let’s not miss this. Though we did not *desire Him*, though we *despised Him*, though we hid, as it were, our faces *from Him*... Everything He was doing, everything He was enduring was *for us*...

*“Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God & afflicted.” & Truth be told, that’s exactly accurate. Jesus *was* smitten by God... & afflicted. They were right about *what they saw*, what they missed (what they were blind to) was *why they saw it*. **CLOSE**

“He was wounded *for our transgressions*, He was bruised *for our iniquities*; the chastisement *for our peace* was upon Him...” This word “wounded” literally means to be “bore through” or “pierced.” (His hands, His feet, His side). It was on account of our rebellion that He would be pierced through. The word “bruised” more literally means “crushed”. Jesus would be “crushed” under the weight of the sin of the world placed upon Him as He hung upon the cross. He bore the weight of (y)our perversities, (y)our depravity, (y)our iniquity. He was punished *by God*, that you/we might have peace *with God*.

⁸ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Pe 5:7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Php 4:6-7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Listen, I can't even bear up under the weight of my *own* sin. Much less could I hope to bear yours. But the LORD laid on *Him* the iniquity of us all! Jesus took the weight of the sin of every person who ever lived & ever *would* live upon Himself!

You see? This is the gospel. We have sinned, we've erred exceedingly & played the fool. We've set ourselves at war against God! But God brings hope, brings help, brings healing, has made peace through the blood of the cross of J.C. who has loved us & given Himself for us. *

"& By His stripes (by His wounds) we are healed..." There's been much debate on this particular point. Does this speak of physical healing? Or does this speak of spiritual healing?

We'll pick up on this point. Hope to lean *into* it & learn *from* it... next time.

Prayer Points:

Father, we're so grateful for Your love for us. The sacrifice You so willingly made for us in the Person of Your Son. We thank You Jesus that in You we have a High Priest, & a Savior who is acquainted w/our pain, our suffering, our worries & anxieties. Teach us to cast our cares upon You, knowing that You care for us. May we honor You in coming boldly before Your throne of grace to find help in our time of need... Lord we need You Always. Help us, strengthen us, be glorified in us.

Jesus bore the guilt of your sin, the shame of your sin, the weight of your sin. He paid the penalty of your sin. Freedom awaits you through faith in Him. Don't be found fighting against the grace of God, humble yourself before Him & receive the salvation so freely given in J.C.