

Today we continue a sermon series in Isaiah- Yahweh saves. This morning we examine Isaiah 53, one of the famous “servant songs” found in the book. The present passage stands as the final stanza of the four suffering servant oracles throughout the latter portion of Isaiah.

What we read today is filled with unique poetic language compared to other Hebrew texts. It is as if Isaiah is using uncommon language to describe the unique Messiah. Truly, I believe the servant songs give a beautiful **high definition picture** of the full nature of the Gospel. So powerful is the story of the Messiah in Isaiah, the early church father Jerome called it the “**Fifth Gospel.**” Today, as we look at the suffering servant, may the Lord open our hearts and eyes (HD Vision) to behold the lamb and the beautiful good news to all who believe in His name! Our two goals: to say wow at the incredible grace of Jesus, and to say yes to the incredible mercy of the Savior.

“The Gospel in HD” (Isaiah 53:1-7) pg # ???

The Gospel is personal (53:1). The song begins in odd fashion, “**who has believed?**” There are reasons for this exclamatory question. What we will see is that Jesus comes into the world in quite an unassuming way, his appearance is ordinary, and was rejected because he suffered. And Jesus told many parables or stories that his rejection would continue (Matt. 21:33-46). However, God was not surprised or content with **man’s rejection** of relationship, the very reason he sent His son for rebels (53:12).

Here is what Isaiah is saying, **without** divine revelation and intervention **no one** would believe! The arm of the Lord is a picture of the personal nature of the Gospel. The arm represents the power of the Lord, but it was personal power. Salvation, yes from His arm, was through His Son. **It’s the difference between yelling at someone drowning and extending your arm.** One commentator paraphrased is this way, “Where has God’s power ever been seen—but here, in His son?” **The salvation of the Lord is personal.**

The personal nature of salvation is manifest in humility (53:2), not with pomp and circumstance. Look at how Isaiah describes Jesus, the Messiah. He grew up like a young plant, much like a **suckling or sapling**. A **tender twig that grows on the branch of another tree only to be cut off** and cast out by men. He had no impressive form or majesty that we should look at him. **Majesty** describes the outward impressiveness of an **important person**. Jesus’ outward appearance and lifestyle did not make it easy to believe that He could be the Lord come to save. Even one of his first disciples, Nathaniel exclaimed, “**John 1:46 “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”**

Why did Jesus come in humility? To show that it is not by human power or majesty but by **faith** we are saved. If Jesus came in humbleness how much more should we live in humble submission to the true King? And even more, **we don’t have to dress Jesus up, make him more appealing so that people will be saved.** It is the humble nature of the Gospel that shatters our pride and self-reliance. **Jesus reigns/saves in humility and strength.**

The suffering servant demonstrates the healing gospel (53:3). In this verse alone the Messiah is pictured as despised, rejected, and a man of sickness. For your sake, Jesus knew suffering and sickness. **Jesus dealt with every aspect of our need.** He identifies with all the infirmities that blight our lives. If you are suffering physically today, Jesus understands. You don’t have a God who ignores your condition. Rather, we have a Savior who entered into our sickness.

Verse four continues, he himself bore our sickness, carries our pain, and was stricken. This word **stricken** is used 60 times in Leviticus 13-14 when referring to skin diseases. But it doesn't refer to the disease as much as the **infliction or consequences**. This is the healing Gospel, **Jesus took our pains and sickness so what one day, by faith, we will be utterly and completely healed!** This is the power of the Gospel, Jesus doesn't remove our sickness, he said, "**give it to me.**" This is the healing gospel of our Lord. **Jesus = healing.**

Not only does Jesus take your pain, but He gives you peace (53:5). The Gospel is peace. The angels announced the birth of the Messiah in similar words: **Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to people he favors.** Where Jesus reigns, peace is found. If you don't have peace in your heart, home, marriage, relationship, friendship, ask yourself, "**Is Jesus ruling?**"

Yet, Isaiah reminds us that peace is costly. The servant was pierced-rebellion, crushed- our iniquity, punished for. It was as if **my peace required his punishment.** The word pierced is the same phrase used in Isaiah **51:9 to the death wound of the dragon.** **Jesus was pierced so that all your personal demons, and dragons would be slayed.** The wound to the side of the Messiah was fatal to your sin, death, and everything that brings hostility. **Jesus is peace.**

The servant is the Great Shepherd (53:6). Isaiah reminds us of our own inadequacy. We are all like sheep, notoriously foolish animals. Collectively, we live with a **herd mentality** that naturally rejects the kindness of the shepherd because we are all astray (Romans 3:23). And yet, Isaiah **give us no out.** We are all culpable for our sins because **each one** has turned to his own way. This expresses the heart of the gospel we are **communally guilty but individually responsible.** We are sinful and I am guilty. And the **king merciful Shepherd punished the one righteous sheep for the disobedient herd.** This is not fair. This is counter cultural. **Why did the one who deserved no punishment receive what he did not deserve? So that those who deserved wrath would receive something beautiful they did not deserve.** **Jesus is our great Shepherd.**

Your salvation is no accident (53:7). Isaiah urges us that this gospel is no accident, but an intentional plan of Yahweh. He was oppressed and afflicted, but he did not open his **mouth.** Jesus did not keep his mouth closed because he was helpless or caught unaware. In fact, Christ reminded Peter that at any moment He would call to the **Father who would provide more than 12 legion (60,000+)** angels at any moment. Rather, the **Servant's tongue and mind were alike disciplined to say an unequivocal yes to injustice and to a death he did not deserve.** By his **silence, Jesus demonstrated that your salvation and eternal hope is intentional.** What does that mean for you? God desires that all men be saved. Not only does the Lord desire your salvation, he intentionally made the way through Jesus Christ his son.

But, God alone knew that it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. No animal can do more than picture substitution: on a person can substitute for a person; only a consenting will can substitute for a rebellious will.

Our Response

12 Therefore I will give him the many as a portion, and he will receive the mighty as spoil, because he willingly submitted to death, and was counted among the rebels; yet he bore the sin of many and interceded for the rebels.

Who are the many? Those who by **faith** have turned from themselves (repentance) and turned to Jesus as their one and only hope.

The end of this prophetic oracle brings us back full circle to the opening question. It is a question that every person must answer for themselves: who has believed? Do you?

Do you?

If you believe, you have much to rejoice over. The Gospel: personal, humble, healing, brings peace, it gathers us together as a kind shepherd, and is intentional.

Notes

What the reader experiences in Isaiah 53 is the fourth and final Servant Song (Isaiah 42, 49, 50, and 53).

This oracle is filled with unique poetic language compared to other Hebrew texts. It is as if Isaiah is using uncommon language to describe the Messiah.

The Ethiopian eunuch is reaching Isaiah 53 when he comes to faith in the Messiah (Acts 8).

Isaiah's report is clearly disbelieved. Why?

1. He comes onto the scene in a quiet and unassuming way (53:2)
2. He has no extraordinary beauty or attractiveness to draw people to him; his "appearance" was quite ordinary.
3. He is rejected because he takes on himself the pain and suffering of the world (Oswalt, 584).

Is. 53:1 Who has believed what we have heard?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

Without divine revelation, who could believe that this one, with his birth and early life, his unimpressive appearance, was the arm of the Lord (Motyer, 427).

Who?

The prophet speaks for those who later came to faith but identifies them with a whole company of spectators who looked at the Servant without understanding (Motyer, 427).

Arm

Cline paraphrases the arm, "Where has God's power ever been seen—but here?"

The arm himself signifies that the Lord, personally, has come to save.

2 He grew up before him like a young plant
and like a root out of dry ground.
He didn't have an impressive form
or majesty that we should look at him,
no appearance that we should desire him.

He seemed to have a wholly earthly or natural origin: the imagery of growth out of the soil points to a human 'family tree.' (Motyer, 427).

Young plant

To men, the servant appeared as a suckling, a tender twig that grows on the trunk or branch of a tree and draws its life and strength. Men cut off the sucklings because they take the life from the tree and in men's sight are to be cast out (Young, 342).

There was no evidence of any specialty or distinctiveness (Motyer, 427).

We feel what Isaiah was doing if we recall how blandly the people dismissed the Messianic status of Jesus on the ground that he came from Nazareth, not Bethlehem (Jn 7:41-42).

Beauty is the same words used in Gen. 29:17 when Rachel was lovely in form and beautiful.

Majesty signifies the outward impressiveness expected of an important person (Motyer, 428).

With every appearance of being a man among men it was not easy to believe that he could be the Lord come to save (Motyer, 428).

Young argues that this verse does not describe the physical appearance of Christ but demonstrates that the appearance of the servant was such that a man, judging from a wrong perspective, would completely misjudge him (Young, 342).

3 He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of suffering who knew what sickness was.
He was like someone people turned away from;
he was despised, and we didn't value him.

The repetition of despised in the first and last lines is a typically Isaianic palistrophe (Motyer, 428).

The Servant was not an incessant sorrower and sufferer but he was notably so, not by reason of his constitution but because he took our sorrows and weaknesses as his own (Motyer, 428).

Esteemed is an accounting word, a reckoning up of value (Motyer, 429).

Isaiah completes a diagnosis of our human condition, which he has been unobtrusively pursuing throughout these three verses: to see the Servant and find no beauty in him reveals the bankruptcy of the human emotions (Motyer, 429).

Men will say pleasant and complimentary things about the Lord of glory. They will not, however, acknowledge that they are sinners, deserving of everlasting punishment, and that the death of Christ was a vicarious sacrifice, designed to satisfy the justice of God and to reconcile an offended God to the sinner (Young, 344).

Is. 53:4 Yet he himself bore our sicknesses,
and he carried our pains;
but we in turn regarded him stricken,

struck down by God, and afflicted.

Verse 4 contains two emphatic subjects, He and we, and through his sufferings were for us we had no part in them, for we stood aloof, reckoning that he must have deserved all he suffered (Motyer, 429). There is one emphatic subject in verse 5 and again two emphatic subjects in verse 6.

He acted by means of substitution. The substitutionary imagery of verse 6c is drawn straight from Leviticus 16 (Motyer, 429).

With neither co-operation nor understanding from us, the Servant took on himself all that blights our lives (Motyer, 430).

Sickness-pains

The Servant dealt with every aspect of our need. With all the infirmities and sorrows that blight our lives (4), and the moral and spiritual wrong and guilt that alienates God (5). Positively, in respect of the former he brings us healing (5d), and in respect of the latter, peace (5c).

Stricken is used sixty times in Leviticus 13-14, not of the disease of leprosy but of the infliction or blow of it (Motyer, 430).

We

Instead of understanding the true reason for his suffering, we regarded him as one punished by God with a loathsome and hateful disease. We should have been horror-struck at ourselves, the guilty ones, and filled with loving admiration for him, the innocent sin bearer (Young, 346).

5 But he was pierced because of our rebellion,
crushed because of our iniquities;
punishment for our peace was on him,
and we are healed by his wounds.

The Servant went deeper in his work for us, dealing with our sinful state, our alienation from God, and our broken personhood (Motyer, 430).

Pierced

Is found in Isaiah only in Isa 51:9, where it is used of the death wound to the dragon.

Is. 51:9 Wake up, wake up!
Arm of the LORD, clothe yourself with strength.
Wake up as in days past,
as in generations long ago.
Wasn't it you who hacked Rahab to pieces,
who pierced the sea monster?

Crushed

Is used of people being trampled to death, the infliction and enduring of crushing agonies ending in death (Motyer, 430).

6 We all went astray like sheep;
we all have turned to our own way;
and the LORD has punished him
for the iniquity of us all.

The picture of straying sheep summarizes all our inadequacy and stresses the peril of sheep without a shepherd (Motyer, 431).

We all// each own expresses both common culpability and individual responsibility. We cannot blame a heard instinct even though wear e all alike implicated (Motyer, 431).

Is. 53:7 He was oppressed and afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth.
Like a lamb led to the slaughter
and like a sheep silent before her shearers,
he did not open his mouth.

Oppressed

The word is most often used in the Old Testament of what taskmasters do to make the life of their slaves miserable. They demand that they make bricks without straw. They press them hard and bring a terrible sense of pressure and burden and stress and tension and oppression on the slaves. Jesus experienced this in the way his enemies continually stalked him and finally captured and tormented him (Piper).

Lamb Led

The slaughter doesn't come until verse 8. Here he is just led to it. And that is a terrifying thing. It is one thing to be oppressed and afflicted if you know that you will walk out of the jail in a few hours into springtime breezes and sunshine. It is something altogether different if you know that it is all leading to the slaughter. Jesus knew it. For him there would be no more springs this side of the resurrection (Piper)

Mouth

The Servant's tongue and mind were alike disciplined to say an unequivocal yes to injustice and to a death he did not deserve (Motyer, 432).

In powerful sacrificial imagery Isaiah foreshadows what the author of Hebrews explicitly states: [Heb. 10:4](#) **For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.**

No animal can do more than picture substitution: only a person can substitute for a person; only a consenting will can substitute for a rebellious will (Motyer, 433).

But Isaiah doesn't understand fully who this servant is. Yet we saw last time that Isaiah knows at least five things about the coming of this Servant (John Piper).

1. He knows that we are all rebel subjects against our shepherd king—God (53:6).
2. He knows that God is sending his Servant who will be rejected by the rebels (53:3).
3. He knows that in being rejected he was not failing in his mission, but was becoming a ransom and substitute for the rebel subjects (53:5): "He was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities."
4. He knows that nations and kings that had not known or understood any of these things will be sprinkled by the Servant and their sight will be restored to see him for who he is (52:15).
5. And finally, Isaiah knows that the final result of all this will be that the servant will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted so that the kings of the earth shut their mouths because of him in reverent silence (52:13, 15).

Illustrations

It is as if you were standing before a dam 10,000 feet high filled with millions of gallons of water. And in one instant the dam exploded sending all of that water cascading toward you. At the moment of impact, and your imminent death, the ground opens up in front of you swallowing every last drop of water and giving you life. This is the picture of Jesus's substitution for you on the cross. Every last drop of God's deserving wrath because of your sin was extinguished because the ultimate sacrifice was offered, slaughtered, and accepted.

Application
