

“Suffering Servant”

(PART 2)
Isaiah 53:7-12

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Introduction:

As some of you might remember, last Sunday morning we started looking together at several questions that had been turned in by various members of this congregation (as well as by several of our recent visitors), and we started to consider some of those questions by looking together at the Old Testament book of Isaiah. One of the questions was concerning the birth of Christ, someone else was asking about the crucifixion, one of our visitors was asking, **“Who is Jesus?”** someone else was asking whether Jesus ever laughed or smiled, and someone else was asking, **“Do we know what Jesus looks like?”** And so, in an attempt to try to answer some of these questions, we started looking at an amazing prophecy made by the prophet Isaiah more than 700 years before the time of Christ, and in our study, we looked at the first six verses of Isaiah 53. **»PPT»**

- First of all, we considered the *shock* and *disbelief* among the Jewish people that the Messiah would come in such a common form. We looked at the Lord’s arrival—His birth into a poor Jewish family, and we considered the fact that He did not look like a Messiah, but rather, that He was average in His appearance.
- Secondly, we considered the fact that the Lord was widely *rejected*, and that during His ministry He was characterized as a *“man of sorrows,”* He was *“acquainted with grief.”* Whether He laughed or smiled, we do not know. We assume that He did, He certainly told some parables that revealed at least some level of humor, and yet the Lord did not come to this earth to make people laugh.
- And then finally, we discovered that Lord went through all of this **FOR US**. We started looking at the scourging that the Lord endured, and we discovered that people often died simply from the scourging, and yet we emphasized last week that the Lord took that abuse and that punishment on our behalf—He did it for us, and He did it willingly.

This morning, I would like for us to continue by looking at verses 7-12 of Isaiah 53. In our pew Bibles, the passage is found on page 1154. **»PPT»** And this morning, we will focus in on the Lord’s death, His burial, and His resurrection. In order to consider the passage in context, though, let us please look together in our Bibles at the entire chapter. We will start at the beginning of Isaiah 53, but we will focus our attention on the last part of it. If you will, then, please look with me at all 12 verses of Isaiah 53—Isaiah 53:1-12...

- 1 Who has believed our message?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?***
- 2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,
And like a root out of parched ground;
He has no stately form or majesty
That we should look upon Him,
Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.***
- 3 He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised,
And we did not esteem Him.***
- 4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.***
- 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.***
- 6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.***
- 7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,
So He did not open His mouth.***
- 8 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
For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?***
- 9 His grave was assigned with wicked men,
Yet He was with a rich man in His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.***
- 10 But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief;
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,
He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days,
And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.***
- 11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied;
By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities.***
- 12 Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great,
And He will divide the booty with the strong;
Because He poured out Himself to death,
And was numbered with the transgressors;
Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,
And interceded for the transgressors.***

Last week, you might remember that we referred to the **“Gospel According to Isaiah,”** and that description is especially appropriate this morning, as we consider the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. As we learned from our Scripture reading this morning, according to the apostle Paul in **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**, the gospel message of **“first importance”** is that **“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”** This morning, then, we will look very carefully at one of those Scriptures to which Paul was referring.

I. **And so this morning, let us please look first of all at Isaiah 53:7-8 as we consider THE DEATH OF JESUS ON THE CROSS. »PPT»**

And we notice in **verse 7** that the prophet Isaiah refers to what happened as a **“slaughter.”** And again, this was not a punishment for the Lord’s own transgressions, but it was a slaughter, it was a sacrifice—like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, Christ, the Son of God, took on the guilt of our sins, and He did it on the cross. As Isaiah says in **verse 8**, **“...He was cut off from the land of the living.”** From the New Testament, we know that He was nailed to a cross. In John’s account, for example, in **John 19:18**, John simply says, **“There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between.”** That is all the Bible really says about the process of crucifixion.

Death on a cross was invented by the Persians and was perfected by the Romans—they were good at it—the Romans were experts at killing people—they knew how to make it painful, they knew how to humiliate people, they knew how to make a show of it, and they certainly knew how to keep people terrified of the government. It was a painful death. In fact, we even have a word in English that goes back to crucifixion—the word **“excruciating.”** When we refer to **“excruciating pain,”** we are literally referring to pain that comes **“out of the cross.”** The pain is **“excruciating.”**

Several years ago, you might remember that we studied the death of Christ from a medical point of view—based on an article on crucifixion that appeared in the ***Journal of the American Medical Association*** (March 21, 1986). In that article, medical doctor William D. Edwards gives all kinds of medical detail concerning the process itself and the cause of death based on the Biblical testimony. We will not go into all of those gruesome details again this morning (I have put several copies of the article in the entryway, if you are interested), but in their research you might remember they gave the measurements for the average nail that was used in a Roman crucifixion. I took those measurements and went to the hardware store and did the best I could, and other than being round instead of square, this is about it. I’m not exactly sure what a nail this size would be used for today (other than perhaps hanging gutters or anchoring landscape timbers), but the nails were driven through the bones of the wrist and through the ankles in order to hold the person on the cross. When driven through the wrists, the nails would often hit the median nerve. You know, when you hit your funny bone, it’s not funny is it? But it would feel like that (a different nerve, but a similar feeling), only constantly, with the weight of the

body on it—up and down, up and down, as the victim tried to breathe on the cross! The pain was “**excruciating.**” ****PASS AROUND**** I don’t know about all of you, but I can get a little light-headed just thinking about a needle—getting a shot or getting blood taken—perfectly clean and sterile in a modern doctor’s office with a nice and highly trained nurse and everything—some of us can’t even handle that—we smell the alcohol swab, and we have to look away, but we are talking here about a giant nail.

Several years ago, **»PPT»** I was able to go to a museum in Cleveland, and in that museum they had a display on loan from the Jerusalem Museum in Israel, and they had two actual ankles that had been discovered in the Jerusalem area—dating back to the First Century. And those two ankles were still fastened together with a giant nail—there were even traces of olive tree wood on the tip of the nail, with acacia wood on the other side (the head side of the nail), as if they used some kind of wooden washer to keep the nail from pulling through the ankles. One nail was piercing both ankles. And apparently, the nail was so hard to remove from the cross that the Roman soldiers would often just cut the wood at that point and would throw the body in a grave or on a trash heap with the nail and part of the cross still attached.

Last week we paid attention to the scourging and the other events leading up to the Lord’s death, so we will not spend too much time talking about any more of the details this morning, but what I’d like for us to notice from this passage in **Isaiah** is that the Lord went to the cross silently. **»PPT»** According to **verse 7**, He did not open His mouth, but he was silent, like a lamb that is led to the slaughter and like a sheep before its shearers. The Lord never tried to argue His way out of the crucifixion. Even though He knew exactly what was coming, He never defended His innocence. He never tried to escape the penalty. In fact, both Pilate and Caiaphas were amazed. The Lord acknowledged who He was, but that was about it. Even as the soldiers hit Him, and spit on Him, and even as they pounded on the crown of thorns—not a single word of protest. Pilate, the Roman Governor, declared him innocent three times during that night, and yet still, not a single word of protest from the Lord. And the reason comes at the end of **verse 8**, “**...He was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people.**” Most of us, when we are falsely accused of something we speak up! We say something! We don’t just sit there and take it, but we object! We defend ourselves! But the Lord, completely innocent, did it for us. Truly, as Isaiah said in **verse 8**, “**By oppression and judgment He was taken away.**” First of all, then, we have seen the Lord’s death on the cross.

II. As we go back to looking at Isaiah 53, I would like for us to notice secondly, that THE LORD WAS BURIED. **»PPT»**

Perhaps we do not always see the importance of the burial, and yet please think with me about what the death and resurrection would have been like without the burial. Imagine Jesus dying on the cross, and then as He is taken down, His eyes suddenly pop open, and He says, “**I’m back!**” At least in my mind, I start to see the

importance of the burial—to prove and to erase all doubt that the Lord was actually dead. And yet, even today, Muslims teach that Jesus only appeared to be dead, that He just kind of passed out a little bit, that He faked it, that the disciples perpetrated a hoax. The Bible, though, teaches that Jesus died and was buried.

Under normal circumstances, Jesus would have been buried with the two thieves who were also crucified that day. According to Roman tradition, all three would have been thrown in a common grave, a grave for the poor, a grave for criminals. As Isaiah says in the first part of **verse 9**, *“His grave was assigned with wicked men.”* In other words, He was supposed to be buried with the others. However, notice that Isaiah then says, *“Yet He was with a rich man in His death.”* Very interesting! More than 700 years in the past, and Isaiah could see that there would be a last-minute change of plans. And yet we find here that the change was not last-minute after all, was it? It was a change in burial plans that had been made in the mind of God for centuries!

Based on the gospel accounts, we know that the rich man was Joseph of Arimathea, a Jewish man who was a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling body. And when Jesus died, the Bible tells us that it was Joseph of Arimathea who asked Pilate for permission to bury the body of Jesus. According to John’s gospel account, Joseph was helped by Nicodemus, and after the Roman’s confirmed that the Lord was dead (by piercing Him in the side), the Bible says that the disciples removed the Lord’s body from the cross, they bound His body in linen wrappings along with more than a hundred pounds of spices, and they laid His body in the tomb. And so instead of being thrown in a common grave as the Romans had intended, the Lord’s body was given the burial of a king, the burial of a rich man. And again, this is something that God had planned more than 700 years before it happened. The work of redemption was done—no more humiliation, no more pain, but the Lord’s body was buried with great honor.

III. But before we finish our study this morning, let us also please consider a third basic concept here, and that is (as we look at verses 10-12), we find that THE LORD WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD. »PPT»

If **Isaiah 53** had ended at **verse 9**, what a depressing chapter it would have been—what a depressing life that Christ would have lived—to live as a Man of Sorrows and then to die a horrible death! But we thank God that Isaiah continues! Near the end of **verse 10**, Isaiah refers to the Lord being able to see His offspring or descendants. Very interesting! We know that the Lord was not married. He never had children. And yet we know that He did live to see His offspring in a spiritual sense. And the Lord did indeed live to see His disciples even after the crucifixion. He was able to see them because He came back from the dead. For Jesus, death was only temporary! And for those of us here this morning, His death means that we can be born into the family of God. And then in **verse 10** (in a further reference to the resurrection), we also find that God the Father would prolong the Lord’s days. In other words, the Suffering Servant would die like a lamb led to the slaughter, but that would not be the end of it—His days would be prolonged. And then in **verse 12**, we have the idea

of a valiant warrior sharing in the spoils of battle. The victory has been won, and so there are benefits! Our sins have been taken away, and then in the very last line of the entire chapter, Isaiah looks forward to the time when the Suffering Servant would live on to ***“...make intercession for the transgressors,”*** which, of course, the Lord still does today.

Conclusion:

»PPT» This morning we have considered the good news—according to the apostle Paul, the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. In **John 12:32**, the Lord said, ***“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”*** And in the very next verse, John explained and said that, ***“He said this to show by what kind of death He was to die.”*** In other words, it was the Lord’s death on the cross that would draw people in, that would cause people to be interested. Of course today, many churches are doing just about everything BUT mentioning the Lord to draw people in. Several weeks ago, one of our Christian women gave me an interesting flyer that she had received in the mail. It was an invitation to a ***“Pirate Party,”*** and on that flyer, they mention everything—food, candy, popcorn, games, balloon art—you even get a free ***“loot bag.”*** There will be connections for women, connections for men, connections for single parents, connections for parents, nursery care—everything! The name of the church manages to honor two men—Paul and Martin Luther, but nowhere on this nicely printed card is there a single reference to Jesus Christ! And yet the Lord Himself said that it was His death that would bring people in.

Did that ever happen? Has anyone ever been attracted to the Christian faith based on the death of Christ? As we close, I would invite you to turn with me this morning to one final Scripture—**Acts 8:32-39**. In our pew Bibles, the passage is found on **page 1715**. The treasurer of the nation of Ethiopia was on his way back home after having been to Jerusalem to worship. He is reading from the Old Testament, and God arranges for a gospel preacher named Philip to run up and join him in the chariot. Philip sits down and we pick up with **verse 32**...

³² ***Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: “HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH.*** ³³ ***“IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL RELATE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH.”*** ³⁴ ***The eunuch answered Philip and said, “Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?”*** ³⁵ ***Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.*** ³⁶ ***As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?”*** ³⁷ ***And Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”*** ³⁸ ***And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down***

*into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.
39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord
snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but
went on his way rejoicing.*

We notice that the man from Ethiopia was reading from **Isaiah 53**—he was reading about the Lord, he was pulled in, but he did not know it was the Lord, and so as soon as Philip explained that the passage was referring to Jesus, the man responded by wanting to be baptized immediately. As soon as he knew that Jesus is the one who died, was buried, and was raised from the dead, he knew that he needed to die to sin, he needed to be buried with Christ in baptism, and that he needed to be raised up to live the Christian life. He did not wait to get back home to Ethiopia, he did not want to go back and do it in Jerusalem, but he wanted to be baptized right there on the spot—and so this powerful man, the treasurer of the nation of Ethiopia, ordered the chariot to pull over to the side of the road, and he was baptized immediately.

And here we are 2,000 years later, and our response to the **Gospel According to Isaiah** continues to mean everything. I would respectfully suggest that we cannot be saved by a pirate. But rather, the Bible teaches that we must turn away from sin, that we must be willing to publicly confess our belief in Jesus as the Son of God, and that we must then allow ourselves to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins, as we reenact the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. If you are already a Christian and have been caught up in some kind of sin, and if you would like to make things right with God, we can pray about that as a congregation. We would invite you to write it down and bring it to the front in just a moment. We can pray about it together. But if you are ready to obey the good news right now, as the man from Ethiopia was, then you can let us know about your decision as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: church@fourlakescoc.org