

life groups sermon discussion

indescribable healing and restoration – isaiah 53



Small groups exist at Kingsway to provide authentic relationships for the life application of the CORE 4 elements of worship, grow, serve, and share

The Difference Between God and Me

*“Who keeps on trusting you
When you’ve been cheating
And spending your nights on the town
And who keeps on saying that he still wants you
When you’re through running around
And who keeps on loving you
When you’ve been lying
Saying things ain’t what they seem . . .*

*God does
But I don’t
God will
But I won’t
And that’s the difference
Between God and me”
from the song **God Will** by Lyle Lovett*

Now, let me be the first to say that there are MANY more differences between God and me than the ones Lyle points out in his tongue-in-cheek tune. And personally, I’m quite happy that God is who He is, and isn’t like Lyle Lovett. Because, truth be told, we’ve all been guilty of the same sins as the woman these lyrics seem directed to. The song does, actually make great theological truths, not the least of which being that there is an indescribable distance between who I am and who God is. And it’s not just limited to the capacity to forgive (although that certainly makes the list). Think of how we love compared to how God does. My love is not as unconditional, freely offered, purely motivated, complete, unfailing - you get the idea.

God is God, and I – most certainly – am not.

But you see, the problem is not that I elevate myself in my mind to being on a level with God. That’s just all kinds of crazy – even for me. But . . . what I DO do, is bring Him down to my level (albeit subconsciously and unintentionally).

I ran across a video online of author Francis Chan talking about the heart behind the new book he was writing called *Erasing Hell*. Part of it really hit me particularly hard and has camped out in the back of my mind since first hearing it.

“The thing I’m most concerned about is this arrogance. In Isaiah 55, God says ‘your thoughts are not like my thoughts and your ways are not my ways. Because as high as the heavens are above the earth, that’s how much higher my ways are than your ways and that’s how much higher my thoughts are than your thoughts.’ So when we begin an argument with: ‘Well, I wouldn’t believe in a God who would...’ -- ‘Who would, what? Do something that you wouldn’t do? Or think in a way that’s different from the way you think? Do you ever even consider the possibility that maybe the Creator’s sense of justice is actually more developed than yours? And maybe that His love and His mercy are perfect - and that YOU could be the one that is flawed? See when we make statements like ‘Well, God wouldn’t do THIS, would He?’ . . . Do you understand that at that moment you’re actually putting God’s actions in submission to your reasoning. You’re, in essence, saying, ‘Well, God wouldn’t think that way or act that way - because I wouldn’t act that way or think that way.’

And yet, when I read the Scriptures; Man, all through this book, I go “God, there are some things you say that I would never say. There are things you do, that I wouldn’t think to do. I mean, even from creation . . . so Adam and Eve sinned – so you’re gonna put a curse on the Earth? I wouldn’t think to do that. And then there are other passages

that are even more difficult for me to stomach . . . then I get to the cross. Really, God? These people have acted *so wickedly*. And so your response is gonna be: 'I'll have my Son, my perfect Son, my only Son, my beloved Son . . . humble Himself, and take the form of one of these human beings. And I'm gonna let these other human beings torture Him? Spit on Him? Nail Him to a cross?' Then you're gonna have Him pay or the crimes of everyone else? I would have never thought to do that."

Neither would you or I, right?

That's the point - and where we need to dive deeper.

Q :: In what ways do we, in general - or in what ways have you specifically – ever bring God down to our level, or as Francis Chan says put God's actions "in submission to our reasoning"?

Q :: In what ways can we approach Scripture, or God, with arrogance?

Q :: Now, Scripture also, however, says "Let us then fearlessly and confidently and boldly draw near to the throne of grace" (Heb. 4:16 - AMP). What's the difference between this and arrogance – or perhaps put better: How do we do one the one without it becoming the other?

Q :: As we mature in our faith, do you think there's a danger of losing our sense of wonder with God? Why or why not?

READ ISAIAH 53.

Panning for Nuggets

For me at least, I have become familiar enough with this passage of Scripture that I can easily come to it and read it only half-heartedly. But there is some incredible "My thoughts are higher than your thoughts" kind of stuff in here that we can skim right past if we're not careful. Let's look at a few:

In v. 4 there is a word that I have not pondered before. It's the word "sorrows." NLT says that "it was our sorrows that weighed him down." I prefer the word picture behind that the NIV (and almost every other major translation) brings to mind though. It says He "carried our sorrows." The implication is that if Jesus has my sorrows, then I do not. Nor do you. Elsewhere in Isaiah we're told God gives a crown of beauty for ashes. And in here in Chapter 53, we see that when something happens to Jesus, we, in turn, receive a benefit.

Q :: What do you think might be the benefit we receive from Jesus carrying our sorrows with Himself?

V 11 really stands out to me. Another one that flew by under my radar. It is the soul that is the sin offering, not the flesh. It is so easy for me to get caught up in the absolute sheer physical torture and brutality that Jesus endured (thanks Mel Gibson) and forget that the true suffering was what the soul of our savior went through.

Q: Do you think our finite mind has a hard time grasping the breadth and magnitude of the "soul suffering" of Jesus?

Q: In v. 10 we read that it was God's will to cause this level of suffering in His Son. The New American Standard translation actually states "But the LORD was pleased to crush Him." Is that something you'd expect from God? Does that put God's love for you in a context that can seem fresh to someone who has been a believer for many years?

Q :: Are there any that stand out to you? Share them, as well as what strikes you in particular. Try to unpack the passage as much as possible.

Sur-prise! Sur-prise! Sur-prise!

"A lot of people say they want to get out of pain, and I'm sure that's true, but they aren't willing to make healing a high priority. They aren't willing to look inside to see the source of their pain in order to deal with it."

Lindsay Wagoner

This quote on healing may be one of my favorite Christian quotes that wasn't meant to be a Christian quote. Our healing was a high priority to God. Isaiah 53 shockingly says that it's the "stripes" of Jesus that heals us. I believe these are not merely the physical stripes left by the whips that savaged his body, but they also represent the stripes left on his soul as it anguished and suffered – and probably more so since the healing we are imparted is a spiritual one and not a physical one.

God often surprises me. And I hope I never become so jaded or cynical that He fails to do so. It's not always what God might do in my life – but like in Isaiah 53 – it's the unexpected way He goes about it that is sometimes so amazing. Consider this excerpt from a story I found while researching this lesson:

Restoration...something I've been talking about
Something...for almost three years. Three long years. To be exact, 2.8 years.

I knew the package in which it would be. I knew what it would look like. I knew what it would feel like. I knew the glory the King would receive. I knew the Power it would take to accomplish. I knew who would be restored. I knew; I just knew.

...or so I thought. I thought...the restoration was of my marriage. I thought God was going to restore [my] beloved and me in our marriage. Restoration but any other means? What's that? Isn't there only one definition? Isn't there only one means and one package for it?

No. God has restored my soul and my heart. God has restored my heart to be full and to be full to the capacity He created in me. --- He restored my soul to His during the three years. He restored my heart to full peace and joy that only He could provide. He has restored my hope in something greater than I thought He had already provided

Q: Ever have a similar thing happen in your life – you were certain of how (or when, or where, or to what end) God was going to act, only to have Him work out something at a much deeper level? Please share . . .

Q: Look again at the quote from Lindsay Wagoner above. Do you believe there are times when we, as believers, avoid looking inside to see the source of our own pain? What might those sources be - and why would we avoid dealing with them?

Conclusion

Appearances may be deceiving when God is at work in your life. Jesus claimed that He would be glorified when lifted up on the cross (John 13:31). But look at the broken man, Jesus, hanging, bloody and beaten on that cross. That looks nothing like glory – from our human perspective. But remember . . . His ways ARE higher than your ways.

Beware of judging God's work in your life by what it looks like right now.