

**“Behold Your King Conquers, Bringing Eternal Life”  
Isaiah 53:1-13**

As we walk through Isaiah 53 together this morning, we will see that it very much follows the pattern of the Gospel laid out by the Apostle Paul at the beginning of I Corinthians 15, which we read together earlier:

*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures – I Corinthians 15:3-4, ESV*

One interesting question should pop out at us as we hear these words: What Scriptures? I Corinthians was probably written before any of the Gospels, almost certainly before any of the Gospels were in wide circulation as “the Scriptures.” So, if Paul is not referring to the Gospels, what Scriptures tell the story of Jesus dying for our sins, being buried and rising again on the third day. Well, “the Scriptures” in the mind of Paul are the Hebrew Scriptures, that part of the Bible we now call the Old Testament.

In the last chapter of the Gospel of Luke, Luke 24, we have an account of Jesus walking with two men on the Road to Emmaus after His resurrection. They don’t recognize who He is, and while they walk, Jesus says to them, “*O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?*” And then we read, “*And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*” (Luke 24:25-27)

So, what specific Scriptures could Paul be referring to and could Jesus have referred to in His walk with these two men? Among all the Scriptures Paul is talking about in I Corinthians 15 and that Jesus shared with the two men on the road to Emmaus, I think Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 had to be among them. Both of these beautiful chapters of Hebrew poetry clearly lay out the death and resurrection of Jesus, even though Psalm 22 was written by King David 1,000 years before Jesus was born and Isaiah 53 was written by the Prophet Isaiah 700 years before Jesus was born.

So, to show this to be the case, we’re going to walk through Isaiah 53, verse-by-verse, and see this clear pattern emerge: *that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.*

**I. Christ Died for Our Sins, vv. 1-8**

First of all, we see most clearly in verses 1-8 of Isaiah 53 that Christ died for our sins.

Who has believed what he has heard from us?  
 And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?  
 For he grew up before him like a young plant,  
 and like a root out of dry ground;  
 he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,  
 and no beauty that we should desire him.  
 He was despised and rejected by men;  
 a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;  
 and as one from whom men hide their faces  
 he was despised, and we esteemed him not.  
 Surely he has borne our griefs  
 and carried our sorrows;  
 yet we esteemed him stricken,  
 smitten by God, and afflicted.  
 But he was pierced for our transgressions;  
 he was crushed for our iniquities;  
 upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,  
 and with his wounds we are healed.  
 All we like sheep have gone astray;  
 we have turned—every one—to his own way;  
 and the LORD has laid on him  
 the iniquity of us all.  
 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,  
 yet he opened not his mouth;  
 like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,  
 and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,  
 so he opened not his mouth.  
 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,  
 stricken for the transgression of my people?

### **A. Despised and Rejected (vv. 1-3)**

He was despised and rejected by men;  
 a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;

*and as one from whom men hide their faces  
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

The first things we see in these eight verses is that Christ was despised and rejected. For centuries, God's people, the Israelites, had been waiting for the Messiah, the Anointed One, to come and redeem and restore their nation. God had given them clear information about this Messiah, information which every good Jewish scholar knew. Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of the line of King David. God had made the promise to David 1,000 years earlier, recorded in 2 Samuel 7, that one of his descendants would sit on the throne over God's people forever.

The prophet Micah had given the location of Messiah's birth, around the same time as Isaiah, 700 years before Christ. The fact that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem was so well known that when the Wise Men from the East came to Jerusalem after the birth of Jesus asking, "Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews?", the scholars told Herod to look in Bethlehem for the newborn king.

God has said that Messiah would be a great and wise teacher, and Jesus held crowds of thousands spell-bound by His teaching on country hillsides for hours. Isaiah has also foretold that Messiah would bring sight to the blind, would cause the lame to walk, would free people from oppression and would preach the Gospel to the poor. Jesus did all of these things openly and with numerous eye witnesses, so the evidence of His qualifications as Messiah were known to all.

But still He was despised and rejected. Ironically, even though God had, right here, told the Jewish people that they would despise and reject their Messiah, they didn't heed this as a warning but went ahead and despised and rejected Him anyway. Why did they reject Him? Quite simply, because He would not serve their agenda and did not fit their preconceived expectations.

People still do this today: They will have God on their terms. They will believe in Him when He conforms Himself to their desires. Many false preachers preach such a God, such a Savior, and they build large followings doing so, but that's not how God works. God's ways are higher than our ways, His plans better than our plans, His purposes will stand and we must come to Him on His terms.

Jesus was despised and rejected, but not without purpose. It was the will of God that He should be despised and rejected, cast out by men and disowned by God's people. Why would God purpose for Jesus to be despised and rejected?

## **B. He Carried Our Sorrows (v. 4)**

*Surely he has borne our griefs  
and carried our sorrows;  
yet we esteemed him stricken,  
smitten by God, and afflicted.*

Well, the first reason we're told in verse 4 is that He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. How can God enter into the grief and sorrow of human beings? How can He identify with our suffering, when he is God Almighty – all-powerful, all-knowing, absolute sovereign of the universe and an eternal, unchanging Spirit? If God is God, then He must have no idea – by His very nature – what it is to struggle as a human being, what it is to grieve, to be lonely, rejected, sad, confused.

And so God became a man, in part so He could enter into our sorrows and griefs. God the Son – the eternal second person of the Trinity – become Jesus of Nazareth, born of a virgin in Bethlehem, so that we could have a sympathetic Savior, one who understands and identifies with our humanity. Consider:

- Jesus probably experienced the death of his earthly father, Joseph.
- He experienced being misunderstood and rejected by His immediate family members.
- He was betrayed by one of His closest followers and friends.
- He wept at the grave of another close friend, Lazarus, even though He knew He was about to raise Him again.
- He was forsaken by His friends in His hour of greatest grief in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He was in such agony that He was sweating drops of blood, while His friends slept.
- He was denied three times by His most ardent follower and He looked directly into his eyes right after the third denial.

Jesus understands and has experienced loneliness, sorrow, betrayal and abandonment. All of this speaks to how Jesus is the “man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”

But Isaiah also says He carried those things for us on His shoulders on the cross. He doesn't just sympathize with our griefs, but in some way He actually bore them Himself. He not only knew His own sorrows, but He carried ours on the cross.

## **C. Crucified for Our Sin (vv. 5-8)**

But it wasn't just our concerns, our sorrows, our griefs. He also bore our sins, our failures, our shortcomings, our immorality and cosmic crimes against God.

*But he was pierced for our transgressions;  
 he was crushed for our iniquities;  
 upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,  
 and with his wounds we are healed.  
 All we like sheep have gone astray;  
 we have turned—every one—to his own way;  
 and the LORD has laid on him  
 the iniquity of us all . . .*

*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,  
 stricken for the transgression of my people?*

This was the main reason why Jesus had to go to the cross, and it receives more explicit treatment than any other cause here in Isaiah 53. For God to be just, sin must be punished. For there to be true justice in the universe, the God of the Universe must be the just and final judge and He must punish crimes and satisfy divine justice.

If we were to bear our own sins in the sight of an absolute, unchangeable and holy God, we would be crushed forever, completely undone for eternity. We are too guilty, too vile and too helpless to be able to stand on our own, bearing our own sin.

But God is not only just and holy. God is also loving and merciful. How can God reconcile these two absolute, unchangeable and perfect aspects of His character?

Psalm 85, another Scripture which anticipates the cross, gives us a beautiful picture of what happened as Jesus hung on the cross, bearing our sorrows, griefs, transgressions and iniquity:

*Steadfast love and faithfulness meet;  
 righteousness and peace kiss each other.  
 Faithfulness springs up from the ground,  
 and righteousness looks down from the sky. – Psalm 85:10-11, ESV*

## **II. Christ was Buried According to the Scriptures, vv. 9**

After telling us of the death of Jesus, Isaiah 53 goes on in verse 9 to tell us about His burial -

*And they made his grave with the wicked  
 and with a rich man in his death,*

*although he had done no violence,  
and there was no deceit in his mouth.*

In this short verse of four lines, we are told three key details about the burial of Jesus, which are seemingly contradictory but were perfectly fulfilled. First, they made His grave with the wicked, then with a rich man in His death and finally that He was known to be innocent.

### **A. With the Wicked**

Jesus' death was by Roman crucifixion, a very public and notorious and shameful death. The place of His death was a public execution site, a place where He literally hung with the wicked, crucified between two criminals, in a place where Rome made a public statement of how it treated the wicked law-breakers within its dominion.

### **B. With a Rich Man**

And yet, when Jesus was dead, He was taken down from the cross and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. The tomb was in every way a rich man's tomb – newly cut and unused – and in every way unexpected for someone who had just been crucified. In the ancient world, a criminal who dies with the wicked is not buried with the rich. Joseph of Arimathea had the tomb cut for himself and his family; sharing a burial place was a common practice but reserved for family members. So a rich man made the decision to bury this condemned criminal's body with himself in his family tomb.

Why would Joseph do this? Why would Pontius Pilate allow it? Because they both knew that Jesus was innocent. Jesus was not thrown on the trash heap with the bodies of the other criminals because everyone knew He was innocent. Those who crucified Him even cried out when He died, "Surely this was an innocent man!" And so, because he was known to be innocent, though He was killed with the wicked, His body was laid to rest in the grave of a rich man, who intended to share it with Him.

## **III. Christ Rose Again, vv. 10-12**

And here's where Isaiah 53 gets really unusual and where we come to Easter morning. Jesus "was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures." Jesus Himself, before He was killed, gave the people the sign of Jonah to indicate His coming resurrection according to the Scriptures, saying in Matthew 12:40, "For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

But right here in Isaiah 53, we see the reality of the resurrection, too. Consider that the body of Messiah, the servant of the Lord, was laid in the tomb in verse 9. That should be the end of the story, right? But it's not . . .

*Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;  
 he has put him to grief,  
 when his soul makes an offering for guilt,  
 he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;  
 the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.  
 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;  
 by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,  
 make many to be accounted righteous,  
 and he shall bear their iniquities.  
 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,  
 and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,  
 because he poured out his soul to death  
 and was numbered with the transgressors;  
 yet he bore the sin of many,  
 and makes intercession for the transgressors.*

### **A. He Shall Prolong His Days**

He shall see His offspring; he shall prolong His days?

How can this be said of a dead man? Some people have speculated that perhaps Jesus didn't really die. Some say perhaps He just lost consciousness on the cross and later revived in the cool tomb. If we understand Roman crucifixion, we'll understand how ridiculous this theory is. The Muslims believe that God rescued Jesus before He had to go to the cross and replaced Him with a look-alike double, perhaps by Judas Iscariot or by Simon of Cyrene. This theory was also put forward by Gnostics and some false teachers in the Middle Ages.

But Isaiah 53 already told the truth about what happened to Jesus on the cross 700 years before His birth. He was crushed and His soul, or life, was made an offering for guilt. He was dead and buried, according to the will of God.

And yet, the same man, the same servant who was killed and buried, shall see His offspring and prolong His days. Jesus didn't have any physical offspring, but He rose again and saw His spiritual offspring. He appeared to His disciples and saw with His resurrected eyes the ones who were given forgiveness through His death and life through His life.

Jesus' days were prolonged and are prolonged still. They had to be in order for all that God had foretold about Him to be true. God had said that the Messiah would reign as king forever and that His kingdom would know no end. This is not possible for any mortal man, only for one who has overcome death and who lives forevermore.

### **B. The Will of God Shall Prosper in His Hands**

And thus, since Jesus is alive again, the will of God prospers in His hands. Again, how can the will of God prosper in the hands of a dead man? But a man Who is alive again and alive forevermore, Who lives and reigns forever, is now in heaven at the right hand of God Almighty, and He is building His church, advancing His Gospel, saving His people from sin and death. The will of God for the people of God prospers in the hands of King Jesus.

### **C. He Shall See and be Satisfied and Justify Many**

*Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;  
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,  
make many to be accounted righteous,  
and he shall bear their iniquities.*

On the cross, Jesus suffered anguish of soul like no one else has ever experienced. But out of that anguish – because that anguish was not pointless and vain but was effective in redeeming God's people – out of that anguish, Jesus sees and is satisfied. That's how Jesus could go from the anguish of "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" to the satisfaction of "It is finished!" and "Into Your hands I commit my spirit."

The righteous one, the servant of God, the Messiah – sees and is satisfied. By His knowledge, by His experiential knowledge of being cursed and condemned, he is able to make many to be accounted righteous and to bear their iniquities.

*Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,  
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,  
because he poured out his soul to death  
and was numbered with the transgressors;  
yet he bore the sin of many,  
and makes intercession for the transgressors.*

In His victory over sin and death, Jesus becomes the firstborn from the dead, the firstborn over God's new creation, the heir of all things. Romans 8 says that those who belong to Him are

“heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him that we may also be glorified with Him.” (Rom. 8:17, ESV)

So, the only real and pressing question left in Isaiah 53 for you this morning is a very personal one. God foretold precisely what he would do through Christ and then He did it. So the question for you is: Are you among the many? Listen again to how this marvelous chapter closes –

*by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,  
make many to be accounted righteous,  
and he shall bear their iniquities.  
Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,  
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,  
because he poured out his soul to death  
and was numbered with the transgressors;  
yet he bore the sin of many,  
and makes intercession for the transgressors.*

He makes many to be accounted righteous for He bears their iniquities. His portion, His inheritance, is divided with the many. He bore the sin of many and makes intercession for them, the transgressors. So, are you among the many? In other words, is He your Lord and Savior? Is He your Messiah, your Redeemer? Are you His and is He yours?