

**“Behold Your King Suffers, Bringing Forgiveness”
Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12**

*“Behold, my servant shall act wisely;
he shall be high and lifted up,
and shall be exalted.” – Isaiah 52:13*

*“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”
He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.” – John 12:32-33*

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 is the fourth and longest of Isaiah’s Servant Songs, songs which describe the character and ministry of the Messiah.

Isaiah 42:1-4:

*Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my Spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.
² He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
³ a bruised reed he will not break,
and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.
⁴ He will not grow faint or be discouraged
till he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his law.*

Isaiah 49:5-6:

*And now the LORD says,
he who formed me from the womb to be his servant,
to bring Jacob back to him;
and that Israel might be gathered to him—
for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD,
and my God has become my strength—
⁶ he says:
“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant
to raise up the tribes of Jacob
and to bring back the preserved of Israel;
I will make you as a light for the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”*

Isaiah 50:4-6:

*The Lord GOD has given me
the tongue of those who are taught,
that I may know how to sustain with a word
him who is weary.*

*Morning by morning he awakens;
he awakens my ear
to hear as those who are taught.*

⁵*The Lord GOD has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious;
I turned not backward.*

⁶*I gave my back to those who strike,
and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard;
I hid not my face
from disgrace and spitting.*

These songs give us a clear picture of the mission, ministry and character of God's Messiah. There is a fifth Servant Song in Isaiah 61, which does not use the word "servant," but this is the one Jesus read as He launched His public earthly ministry in Galilee at the synagogue of Nazareth:

*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captivity
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
² to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,*

This one is interesting because it does not have the word "servant" but it does have the word "anointed" – the Hebrew word "Messiah."

Through these Servant Songs, we can see several things about the Messiah, all of which were fulfilled in Jesus:

1. He was anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit.
2. He was sent to establish justice on the earth.
3. He was gentle toward the weak.
4. He spoke with great wisdom, extending compassion to those who were weary.
5. He was sent to be a light to all the nations, not just Israel.
6. He came to preach the Gospel to the poor and oppressed.
7. He came to bring deliverance and freedom to captives.
8. He obeyed God fully and never shrunk back.
9. He was rejected, mocked, disgraced, beaten.

Isaiah 53, the longest and most detailed Servant Song, shows us exactly how Jesus accomplishes His mission of establishing justice, extending compassion, bringing deliverance, fulfilling the will

of God and bringing the Gospel and how all of these things fit with His being beaten and disgraced.

Our Problems:

First of all, Isaiah 53 uses two words to describe and define our main problems that Jesus came to deal with, to take away: transgression and iniquity. On Sunday, we'll focus in on sorrow and grief, which are also in view here, but tonight I want to focus on these two words, transgression and iniquity.

*“But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;” – Isaiah 53:5*

1. The Guilt of Our Transgression: Law-Breakers

Transgression refers to a breaking of God's law; it represents the legal guilt we incur as law-breakers, as transgressors. God's law is holy, good and right. God's standard is the right standard. He commands us to love Him with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves. He then spells out for us what it means to love God and neighbor in the Ten Commandments.

We are guilty. We have broken God's law in our thoughts, in our words and in our actions – both by the wrong things we have done and by the right things we have left undone. Our guilt is great and real and pressing and must be dealt with. If the Messiah is to establish justice on the earth, something must be done about our guilt.

2. The Filth of Our Iniquity: Wicked Sinners

But the problem of sin is deeper than guilt. Guilt is our legal problem, but we also have deep character problems. Iniquity refers to wickedness, perversity, defilement of character and soul. Another word for this is pollution. In other words, not only are we guilty, but we are also polluted. Not only are we condemned by the law but our consciences are defiled and our souls are stained.

But Jesus was pierced for our transgressions and was crushed for our iniquities. The language of pierced is so graphic and specific. Our Savior was pierced by man's nails and spear, but He was crushed by the weight of God's wrath against sin.

Our Servant-Savior:

When our Savior Servant suffered for our sin, He was disfigured, marred beyond human semblance, and despised, rejected by men.

1. He was disfigured. (52:14)

*“As many were astonished at you—
his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance,
and his form beyond that of the children of mankind” – Isaiah 52:14*

The fact that Jesus was disfigured or marred is more than just an indication of the method of His punishment and death. Jesus was scourged and was beaten severely. As the Servant Song in Isaiah 50 said, He gave His back to those who strike. Certainly Roman crucifixion was a brutal and bloody method of punishment and death and the scourging process with the Roman cat of nine tails would disfigure and tear people apart more severely than we can easily imagine.

But this word that is used to describe the Messiah has another, deeper significance. To be marred and disfigured carried with it the idea of being cursed.

2. He was despised. (53:3)

*“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.” – Isaiah 53:3*

But Christ was not only disfigured. He was also despised, rejected by men. The religious leaders rejected Him from the very beginning because His power and His popularity made Him a real threat to them and their political position. The crowds turned on Him quickly during the final week of His life when it became clear to them that He wouldn't serve their political interests either. The Romans turned on Him when they realized they could win political favor with the Jewish leaders and the crowds by crucifying Him, though they knew He was an innocent man.

3. He was condemned. (53:8)

*“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,
stricken for the transgression of my people?” – Isaiah 53:8*

But it wasn't just the people who turned against Jesus. Verse 10 tells us “Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief.” Verse 8 tells us that He was “stricken for the transgression of my people.” God crushed His only Son. God condemned His only Son for the transgressions of His people.

Our Benefits:

And what are the benefits we receive from His condemnation – from His rejection, from His being crushed and abandoned?

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

*⁵ 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.*

*⁶ 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.” – Isaiah 53:4-6*

1. Peace (53:5)

His chastisement brought us peace. We need peace and we suffer from an astonishing lack of it in our lives and in our world. We lack peace within ourselves, peace with others and most importantly - though we sometimes don't see it as being most important – we lack peace with God. Jesus secures peace between us and God by taking our offense, our guilt, our defilement upon Himself. He brings us peace between each other as He reconciles us to each other in the body of Christ.

Only when we have peace with God and peace with each other can we find that elusive peace, the peace that surpasses all understanding and which guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, the peace of God that dwells within each of us as guilt, condemnation, shame and isolation are taken away by the cross and replaced by forgiveness, deliverance, acceptance, adoption and love.

2. Healing (53:5)

With His wounds we are healed. Jesus' death also secured our healing, the healing of our souls from the destructive and devastating effects of sin and the healing of our bodies from the same. Now the full and final healing of our bodies must wait until Jesus returns and brings a final end to sin and its consequences and ushers in the new heavens and the new earth, but we do taste His healing in our souls and even in our bodies in this life.

3. Forgiveness: An Offering for Guilt (53:10)

*“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.” – Isaiah 53:10*

Not only do we receive peace and healing, but we are also truly, fully, freely and forever forgiven in Christ because of His sacrifice. His soul – that is, His life – was made an offering for guilt. God the Father accepted this offering and the evidence in verse 10 is the resurrection, which we’ll talk about on Sunday.

4. Justification: Accounted Righteous (53:11)

*“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.” – Isaiah 53:11*

Finally, as Jesus bears our iniquities, verse 11 tells us that we are accounted as righteous because of Righteous One, God’s Servant. To be accounted as righteous is more than to be forgiven, as wonderful as that is. To be accounted righteous is to have Christ take away our iniquities and to give us His righteousness in their place.

As we close our consideration of the cross of Christ from Isaiah 53, how do we respond? I think Hebrews 13: 11-15 is helpful –

For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. – Hebrews 13:11-15, ESV