
“Pierced To Bring Us Peace”

ISAIAH 53:1-12

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At A Glance

Isaiah 53:1-12 shows us the Suffering Servant who steps into our griefs, carries our sorrows, and willingly takes the punishment our sins deserve. In this message we see how the cross is not just a tragic event, but the planned, willing, and effective sacrifice that brings us peace with God. This sermon calls wandering, weary sinners to look to Christ alone for forgiveness, healing, and everlasting peace.

Isaiah 53 invites us to face both the reality of our brokenness and the depth of God’s mercy. We all know what it is to carry grief, guilt, and burdens —and Isaiah tells us of One who would step into our world to carry what we cannot carry and heal what we cannot heal.

But the staggering truth is that when the Messiah came, most would overlook Him. Isaiah asks, “Who has believed what he has heard from us?” because he knew many would see Jesus and yet fail to see Him with eyes of faith.

This passage brings us to the very heart of the gospel: the willing, purposeful suffering of the Servant who was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. If you’ve ever wondered whether God loves you, whether your sin can be forgiven, or whether peace with God is possible—Isaiah 53 shows that Jesus welcomes you with arms wide open.

Isaiah 53:4-6

⁴ 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.

How Few Would Believe

Verse 1 Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

It’s almost as if the prophet was able to look down the pipeline of history and see how few people would believe in Jesus. This was bewildering to him because of both the testimony of the ancient prophets and the **arm of the Lord**, revealed in the gospel – the power of God for salvation. (cf. Romans 1:16)

This is an exaggerated and rhetorical question, highlighting the preposterous notion that anyone could hear and see, and yet not believe. Thus, it reveals to us the true nature of belief. It requires faith, not just sight or sound. Paul stands on the other side of Christ from Isaiah and looks back on the unbelief of Israel and quotes this same verse.

“...But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?’ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” Romans 10:16-17

Both Paul and Isaiah recognized that there is a sensory hearing and a hearing that leads to faith. And the two are not the same. You can hear with your ears without hearing with faith.

Just An “Ordinary” Man

Verse 2 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.

Jesus **grew up before Him**, that is before God, under His watchful care as a Father. That Jesus **grew up** reveals something profound: He needed to grow up. The Son of God entered the world as a baby, not an adult. This time of year calls us to dwell upon that fact. He spent 3 years ministering to people and 30 years growing up. Think of the humility of that. The selflessness of that. It is for this reason that the author of Hebrews tells us He can relate to us. He has been tempted in every way we are tempted. This makes Him a particularly effective high priest who intercedes for us.

and like a root out of dry ground – Jesus was the offspring of David through Mary, a lineage that had all but dried up.

Not only did He come from dry ground, but he had **no form or majesty...no beauty**. He was so ordinary that people had a hard time seeing beyond it.

“Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” Matthew 13:55-56

(PS. For my Catholic friends, Mary was not a perpetual virgin.)

It was shocking to people that this Jesus of Nazareth would make such audacious claims and perform such incredible miracles and teach with such authority.

What becomes clear from this prophecy is that it would not be the appearance of Christ that reflects the glory of God, but His character. It was His wisdom, His power, His meekness, His holiness, His love. It is these, and these alone, that draws men to behold His glory. It is not his form, stature, physique, or face.

Despised And Rejected

Verse 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.

He was despised by men not only in His teaching, but supremely in His crucifixion. Not only did men reject His gospel, but they rejected His deity, and crucified Him for claiming such.

Literally, He ceased to be among men. His appearance, though without beauty, was at least human. Not so on the cross. *“His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being, and his form marred beyond human likeness...” Isaiah 52:14*

The Roman crucifixion had not yet been invented, but these were the cruel effects of it. Many victims died from the flogging before they were even nailed to the cross.

Those who survived the flogging were mercilessly exposed to the elements, sometimes their bones and tendons were even visible to passersby. To say He was **a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief** is an ironic understatement.

Our Substitute

Verses 4-5 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.

Those who **despised** Him and **esteemed Him not** should have venerated Him because **he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows**. Identifying with the Jews of Jesus' day, Isaiah used the phrases **our griefs** and **our sorrows**. Then he says **we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted**.

Jesus, our substitute, **carried our sorrows** to the cross. He was **pierced** by the thorns on his head, the nails in his hands and feet, and the sword in His side. He was **crushed**, or beaten, tortured even.

Upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace. The chastisement, or punishment, was not for His own wrong doing, but ours. It did not bring peace between God and Jesus, for there was never conflict.

Rather, the conflict exists between God and man. Thus, the peace proffered by His chastisement is between God and us.

With His wounds we are healed – the lashings that shred his back and sides to pieces, opening gaping wounds were for our spiritual healing.

“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:6-8

Sheep In Need Of A Shepherd

Verse 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.

Listen to the lyrics of the hymn, *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*, “Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love. Here’s my heart; O take and seal it; seal it for thy courts above.”

Like it or not, the bible compares mankind to sheep who have gone astray. What we need is not a motivational coach or liberating king, but a self-sacrificing shepherd. And that’s exactly what we received in Christ.

“And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd.” Ezekiel 34:23

and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all – Second Corinthians 5:21 tells us He was not simply a sin offering, but became sin for us. Thus, we do not become merely righteous, but the righteousness of God. This is good news because there is none righteous, no not one. (cf. Romans 3:23) And the wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23)

We have a sin debt that we could never repay, because we have sinned against an infinite God. Thus, until we receive by faith the sacrificial atonement for our iniquity laid upon Him, we remain condemned in our sin, eternally.

Despite recent contradictions, the clear teachings of Jesus, Paul, Peter, James, Jude, and John is that of an everlasting, eternal torment in a real place called Hell. At least 26 New Testament verses confirm this.

God has revealed the truth in His word. It is not for us to soften it, but to submit to it. And to proclaim it as a warning. Jesus taught more on hell than He did on Heaven. And He died to set us free from it.

Like a Silent Lamb

Verse 7 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.

Who remains silent under such cruel treatment when speaking could vindicate and end it all? He could have called down twelve legions of angels with one appeal to the Father. (cf. Matthew 26:53) Yet, He never spoke in His own defense.

Verses 8-9 For the sake of time, I want to simply highlight the detail of prophecy fulfilled centuries later. **⁹And 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.**

He was hung between two thieves and he was buried in Joseph of Arimathea's freshly cut tomb. Matthew records that Joseph was a "rich man." (cf. Matthew 27:57-60)

there was no deceit in his mouth – He was not charged with any violent crime deserving death. Instead, He was charged with blasphemy – making Himself equal to God – surely a deceptive claim if it were not true.

There's an ancient heresy that Jesus never claimed to be God. Don't believe that. He may have never said, "I am God." But He did say, "I am" – rendered in Greek *Ego Eimi* – seven times in John. And each time He said it, He was associating with the God who called Himself *I Am*.

Jesus said in *John 8:58*, "*Before Abraham was, I am.*" This was a clear claim to divinity. What John records in the next verse is that the Jews picked up stones to throw at Him. Consider their response and what it means.

Here's an even more direct example from John 10. "*I and the Father are one.*' *The Jews picked up stones again to stone him...The Jews answered him, 'It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God...'*" *John 10:30-33*

Charged with blasphemy, they crucified a man who never sinned. No violence. No deceit.

The Will Of The Father, And The Son

Verse 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.

It was the Lord's **will to crush Him** not because God is a sadistic monster, but because in their infinite love and mercy, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, dwelling in perfect unity, agreed to do this in eternity past.

This was not imposed upon Christ. He laid down His life willingly. Jesus said, "I and the Father are one." (John 10:30) One, both in essence and in will. Therefore, it was the will of Christ to be crushed by the Father and to be **put to grief**, to **make an offering for guilt**, too.

This offering for guilt is called propitiation in the New Testament. It is the unassailable proof of God's love for you. "*In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*" *1 John 4:10*

Having done so, **he shall see his offspring**. Not born of flesh and blood, but of the spirit. (cf. John 3:5-8) Paul says in Colossians 1 that Jesus is "*the firstborn from the dead.*" *Colossians 1:18* And in *Romans 8:29*, Jesus is said to be the "*firstborn among many brothers.*"

Why was it the will of the Lord to crush Him? Why did Jesus agree to it? It was the joy of His offspring. *“who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:2*

Verse 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.

The result of His suffering is not defeat, but victory. Through His suffering, Jesus, the **righteous one**, makes **many to be accounted righteous**. This is because He has borne **their iniquities**. *“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Corinthians 5:21*

Verse 12 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.

The reward for the suffering servant is **the many**. That He is the firstborn among many brothers. This is His joy set before Him. This is what He prayed for in John 17 – those who would believe. And even now Jesus **makes intercession for the transgressors**. In the words of Hebrews 7:25 Jesus “lives to make intercession” for us. You, brother and sister, are the treasure for whom Christ died.

It is because Jesus knew that His death on the cross would satisfy the wrath of God for all who believe. What an incredible prophecy – the suffering servant. The Christ, the Son of God, sent to die. And right there in the middle of it in verse 5 is a profound statement. Let’s revisit that as we prepare to close today.

Peace With God

Verse 5 upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. Adam and Eve enjoyed a peaceful relationship with God, strolling with Him in the garden in the cool of the day. But in their Fall, that was lost. Rejecting God’s rule over their lives, they believed the lies of the enemy and became God’s enemy themselves. Death was the tragic result. Death and separation.

This is the lot of all mankind, for in Adam all sin, therefore all die. (cf. Romans 5:12) We are at enmity with God not because He hates us, but because we hate Him and reject His rule in our lives. But whereas Christ died for us, He made peace with God through the blood of His cross. (cf. Colossians 3:20)

When you and I accept the gracious gift of salvation bought for us with His blood, we are brought into everlasting peace with God. This peace – peace with God – is the basis for all true, lasting peace.

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you...” John 14:27

Three quick points of application this morning:

Receive The Peace He Purchased (v. 5)

There is nothing left for you to do to be at peace with God. Jesus has done it all. It is not His chastisement *plus* your conformity. It is not His piercing *plus* your performance. It is not His offering *plus* your obedience.

It is simply His chastisement, His piercing, His offering that brings sinful man into right relationship with God. Which brings me to the second point.

Stop Wandering And Return To The Shepherd (v. 6)

You don't need to keep wandering around in the wilderness hoping to get your life right before coming to the Good Shepherd in complete surrender. He's calling you to Himself now.

To continue to wander because you don't feel worthy is to compound the sin, it's to add insult to injury. It's rooted in the premise that His death was insufficient to atone for your sin. It cheapens the cross.

Furthermore, if you've come to the good shepherd, why would you doubt His goodness and willingness to lead you to what is good? If the Good Shepherd laid down His life for you, why do you think that following Him would lead to anything less than what He knows is best?

Is this not the source of so much anxiety, that one tries to do life their own way rather than following Him? This is an invitation to choose surrender over stubbornness.

Why continue to drag your heels? Why continue to search for better paths? The shepherd, David says, leads us in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. (cf. Psalm 23:3) Surely He will not mislead you.

Speaking of His name. Let's close with our final point today.

Proclaim The One Others Overlooked. (v. 1-3)

The thing that should matter most to us who have received the purchased peace and have come under the shepherding care of Jesus is that His name be made great among all peoples.

It is that those who have never heard, and those who have heard, but not by faith, would hear by faith the name, and the gospel, of Jesus Christ. This is the highest end and purpose of our lives. To make His name great. To magnify Christ and multiply disciples wherever we go. Amen?

At the cross, every line of Isaiah 53 came true: our griefs carried, our sins punished, our peace purchased, our healing secured. The question is no longer, "Has Christ done enough?" but, "Will I come to Him in repentance and faith?" Because all we like sheep have gone astray—but in Christ, the Lord has laid on *Him* the iniquity of us all, so that we might come home to God in *peace*.