

Isaiah 53:1-6 A Man of Sorrows 3/25/18

Who has believed what he has heard from us?

And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

*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.*

*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.*

*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.*

(Pastor prays)

One week before Easter Sunday and this passage gets us there, to the scene in an unusual way. Isaiah 53 is about Jesus and it speaks remarkably plainly about Jesus 700 years before the coming of Christ. In fact, there is a story tucked in Acts Chapter 8 that centers around this very passage.

It's a story of a man named Phillip, one of the first deacons of the early church. The Lord appeared to him and sent him out to a lonely desert road, and there he meets an Ethiopian official riding in a chariot and that court official is reading this passage right here in front of us.

Phillip, the deacon, asks him, “Do you understand what you are reading?” The guy says, “No, I need someone to explain it.” Phillip climbs up into the chariot and reads this passage and shows him Jesus from Isaiah 53 and that rich man gave his life to Jesus.

Here before us is the “suffering servant” passage, and as far as I’m concerned, it is the Old Testament passage that best captures the death of Jesus for sinners. This passage is great in several ways. It has evangelistic value - being a strong Old Testament description of the substitutional death of Jesus to atone for our sins. The passage has great apologetic value because it was written with pinpoint accuracy 700 years before the crucifixion, which is evidence of the supernatural origin of Isaiah and the whole Bible. It has devotional value, and you would do well to take verses 5-6 and read them slowly and think about Jesus in the place of sinners. This passage has great confidence value. It’s clear that God made a plan for our salvation before the foundation of the world and predicted it through a man named Isaiah.

So, I’ve been thinking about how I get at this passage and explain it in a way that makes sense and will be the most helpful for you especially as we look forward to next Sunday. This passage is one of grace.

God’s Grace to Man is Best Seen in Jesus Christ

Isaiah 53 tells us a lot.

The Hole You are in Is Deeper Than You Think

What I mean by this is that our sin and our capability to commit sin is far greater and deeper and more profound than any of us actually know. Allow me to run through this passage and just show you quickly all the ways these six verses point to our situation. Ready?

We have a lack of faith. V. 1 *Who has believed what he has heard from us? A rhetorical question and the obvious answer is – nobody.*

We are deaf to God. V. 1 *And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?* No one. And if He doesn’t reveal himself, we stay in our sin.

Our grief and sorrow are too heavy. V. 4 *Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;* because we don’t have the capacity. He lifts them off of us at the cross and carries them as if they were His own. You know what that word “grief” is? It’s

the damage that sin brings. Sins of other people damage us, and we damage them and Jesus comes and says, “Here, I’ll carry that.”

Our transgressions are real. V. 5 *But he was pierced for our transgressions;* A transgression is a willful rebellion. That’s our “on purpose” sins. And we almost never sin by accident. Our willful rebellion is the cause and His being pierced is the effect.

Our iniquities are too many. V. 5 *he was crushed for our iniquities;* Iniquity is the collection of sin that displays the perverted depth of our fallen human nature. Verse 5 says He was crushed for our iniquities. Crushed – such a bad word in the Old Testament that is used to describe agonies ending in death. It’s torture in the extreme.

We are anxious and need peace. V. 5 *upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,* Peace with God because we are alienated.

We are sick and need healing. V. 5 *and with his wounds we are healed.* Our soul is sick.

Keep looking.

Sin is universal. V. 6 *All we like sheep have gone astray;* Outside of Christ, every one of us here is a wanderer and lost.

Sin is individual. V. 6 *we have turned* It’s on purpose. Say what you want about adultery, but it doesn’t happen by accident. Bells don’t ring themselves.

Sin is prideful. V. 6 *we have turned—every one—to his own way;* We want what we want of our own free will, not knowing that our freedom is really slavery to sin.

Sin is Foolish. V. 6 *All we like sheep have gone astray;* But we have a shepherd to guide and counsel and keep us from getting into foolish things.

Sin is Dangerous. V. 6 Sheep without a shepherd are in danger. Go sometime and read Psalm 23 and see how Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

This passage tells us when you are in this world without Jesus, the hole is deeper than you thought it was. That’s what this passage says about our sin. Now let’s see what this passage says biographically about Jesus.

Jesus is Better Than You Ever Imagined

Let’s run through the passage again, except this time, let’s look at Jesus.

He is Divine. V. 1 *And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?*

That phrase – long arm of the Lord – is used in Isaiah 51 & 52 to speak of God Himself. It's telling us that Jesus is fully God and worthy of lordship.

He is Sovereign. V. 1 *Who has believed?* And the Answer is: no one. To whom has He been revealed or uncovered? No one can believe unless God reveals. If the Spirit does not reveal Isaiah 53 to a person, that person will never believe.

He is Humble. V. 2 *For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground;* That's a description of the incarnation. He grew up like every other boy.

He is Unimpressive. V. 2 *he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.*

He was Despised. V. 3 *He was despised*

He was Rejected. V. 3 *and rejected by men,*

He was Grief-Stricken. V. 3 *a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;*

He was Shunned. V. 3 *and as one from whom men hide their faces*

He was not Valued. V. 3 At the end of verse 3 it says *and we esteemed him not.*

That's an accounting term. They didn't think He added up to much.

So, the question then has to be – why would God's son endure all that? We just read that it was for sinners.

In Jesus, God's Grace Gets People out of Holes

I want to turn our attention now to the heartbeat of the passage - verses 5 & 6. Here you have:

The centrality of Christ on the cross. The necessity of Christ on the cross. The exclusivity of Christ on the cross.

In verse 5 there are four great statements of what Jesus has done for sinners. And in verse 6 there is one beautiful saving conclusion.

Let's look at verse 5 first and the four phrases of salvation.

he was pierced for our transgressions; There is a cause-and-effect relationship. Our sins are the cause and Jesus being pierced is the effect. The force of the word “pierced” cannot be ignored. It’s used several times in the Old Testament prophesy about Jesus, the most famous being Psalm 22:16. When Jesus hung on the cross, He quoted part of Psalm 22.

*For dogs encompass me;
a company of evildoers encircles me;
they have pierced my hands and feet –*

On the cross, Jesus in the place of sinners.

he was crushed for our iniquities; Crushed. The flavor of agony and the awful price to make us acceptable to God. From the top of His head, punctured with the crown of thorns to the soles of His feet that were nailed to a cross. He was nothing but wounds and bruises and sorrow. Jesus dying in the place of sinners.

upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, His head to be spat upon and beaten. His shoulders to carry the cross. His back for scourging and whipping. His side for the sword. His hands to be pierced. His feet hobbled so that we could have one thing that we cannot create or buy. Jesus dying in the place of sinners.

It’s with His wounds that we are healed. It’s the death of Jesus on the cross that heals the human condition, and verse 6 is the biography of every person that has ever come to Christ or who ever will come to Christ. *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.* The Lord has caused the iniquities of us all to fall on Him. Look – your sins – all of them – lust, hatred, greed, lying, legalism, laziness, gluttony, selfishness, pride...

Whatever you can think of that you rightly feel guilty about, God has put the punishment that you deserve onto Jesus. In verse 6, the divine act of God gathering into one place, all of the sin and placing all of that sin on one substitution. Jesus died on the cross, paying for all the sins of every sinner that will ever be saved.

I’m pleading with you to look to Jesus as your substitute and Savior and give your life to Christ today.

(Pastor extends the invitation and prays)