

“Christ our Man of Sorrows “

(Isaiah 53:1-3)

Pastor/Elder Phil Layton, GCBC, April 28, 2019

Let's continue our worship in prayer before we sing the prayer Show Us Christ. Today Isaiah 53 will show us Christ as our Man of Sorrows familiar with suffering and grief and who surely took up our infirmities and sorrows. That's a timely truth for Sri Lanka in their sorrows and grief after 200+ died – many of them in church last week. Sri Lankans are shell-shocked literally from terrorists, from trauma, suffering in grief. An evangelical pastor there wrote on DesiringGod.com ways to pray for Sri Lanka I'm using to help me

Let's pray. Our Father of mercies, we thank you your Word says as a father has compassion, as far as the east is from the west, so great is your love and compassion. Your Word tells us government and security officials are your agents of justice and judgment for evildoers, and we ask they do what you have called them to do. Lord Jesus, help your church do what you call her to do, to be agents of peace in that troubled and needy country. As Pastor Ajith has shared, who has preached at one of the churches and knows many of the dead and injured personally, I ask what he's asked for 1) holy-love, even by the churches to their enemies, and love to any affected by these acts of hate.

Our brother's request is also for faithfulness and for healing physically and emotionally, and we intercede for believers to bring healing spiritually and hope. We ask for your comfort and strength, and protection against unrest.

For your glory, make your gospel shine brighter than the darkness of Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism and unsaved professing Christians. For your sake, we entreat your mercy to victims and to save even terrorists by your grace. Thank you O our Father, there is a Redeemer, God's Own Son, for any sin. Even as many died celebrating Christ's resurrection, bring life from all this.

From the rubble may your kingdom rise, Lord, in Sri Lanka and other areas Christians are persecuted and targeted. Give them strength and endurance. Show them Christ, the Man of Sorrows who is acquainted with grief and bears them up and carries their sorrows. God, forgive us for our apathy. We thank you we gather here with more freedoms and safeties than around the world, but help us to not take this for granted, and forgive us when we have. Humble us Lord Jesus, when we grumble because church isn't exactly how we would like it to be. Holy Spirit, show us Christ, who you love to glorify.

SIT DOWN FOR LAST SONG BEFORE COMING BACK UP

He is risen! Thank you, musicians, for preparing our hearts, that last song is my favorite and has really been our focus in our series through the book of Isaiah, showing us Christ. Let's continue our worship in the Word of Christ.

Why are we doing this? We exist by God's grace and for God's glory and that's our church's ultimate purpose. Our vision, our mission begins there and that's why I'm preaching, because God by His grace reveals His glory through the preaching of His Word. So turn to Isa 53 and that's our prayer that the Spirit will show us Christ and help every heart treasure Him as Lord

We sang 'help us to receive ... help our unbelief,' last week in Lk 24 there was a stranger on the road to Emmaus who helped disciples slow to believe and receive all the prophets had spoken. He showed them Christ from their scriptures, and talked about Isa 53, no doubt. He opened up minds and eyes to see and ears to hear and led them in His truth He burned into their hearts.

Our hearts can be hard and stony but God can break and plant His Word in us and cause it to bear fruit. For our needy souls may He speak to us today.

PREACHING AND HEARING IT IS AN ACT OF WORSHIP

This is the Word of our risen, reigning, returning Lord. Isaiah 53:1 *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.*

Man of Sorrows, what a name, for the Son of God who came. If we kept on reading v. 4-12, we'd see His scourging by whips, piercing by nails, silence before His accusers, His grave planned to be with the wicked but a rich man at His death buried Him. At Easter last week, Resurrection Sunday, we saw His resurrection in this text. This week we see first He's a Man of Sorrows.

Last 2 weeks we remembered passion week, passion means the suffering of Christ. Polycarp, a disciple of the apostle John, called this chapter a 'golden passion of the OT.' This chapter has been called the crown jewel of the prophets, or the brightest light in the cosmos of prophecy. Spurgeon called the text 'the very heart of the Scriptures...[its] very Holy of holies...a Bible in miniature. It is the condensed essence of the gospel.'¹ Luther said Isa 53 should be memorized by every believer. Let's memorize together as we go.

It's also been called the Mount Everest of the whole OT and it's not to be climbed quickly (it will take us 3 more weeks to scale these peaks because there's so much to see). This passage actually gives more details about the suffering of crucifixion than the NT gospels but he wrote 700 years before.

How can you read and not see and believe this is a word about Christ? But so many reject it. v. 1 in NAS: *Who has believed our message* [or 'report']?

This is the message of Isa 52, v. 7, the good news that beautiful feet bring.

Listen to how God inspired Paul in Rom 10 to quote and apply Isa 52-53:

*'...the Scriptures say, "How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!" But not everyone welcomes the Good News, for Isaiah...said, "LORD, **who has believed our message?**" So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ [word of Christ, gospel message]. But I ask, have the people of Israel actually heard the message? Yes, they have...later Isaiah spoke...But regarding Israel, God said, "All day long I opened my arms to them, but they were disobedient and rebellious." (NLT).*

Isaiah 53:1 looks prophetically at the people of Israel in the times of Christ, and asks who of Israel has believed the good news of the gospel of Christ?

John's gospel says of Jesus '*not even his brothers believed in him,*' and of the nation in general it says: *Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: 'Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?' For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says... John quotes then comments: *Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him (7:5, 12:37-41).*²*

Israelites as a whole did not believe Isaiah's message of Messiah, and even the disciples when He died like Isa 53 describes, they didn't believe He was the Messiah that weekend. They didn't believe even as they heard the report that Jesus rose from the dead the 3rd day. Even though Jesus said He'd rise.

Last week I read from Lk 24, and when the ladies told the disciples 'He is risen,' none of the disciples responded 'He is risen *indeed.*' It says '*they did not believe the women because their words seemed to them like nonsense...*'

And as Jesus talks with 2 disciples on the road He rebukes them as '*slow of heart to believe...*' To them He reveals Himself and they went to tell the 11

In that same chapter when Jesus appears to them, they still don't believe it's Him, they think it's a ghost. Jesus said '*why do doubts rise in your minds? ... Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones...*'...*he showed them his hands and feet.*' So to them was the arm of the Lord revealed and the nail prints at the end of His arms but it says '*they still did not believe it.*'

One famously doubted unless a scar under the arm of the Lord was revealed to him to let him put a hand in His side. Who of even the disciples believed?

But this isn't just about then, it's the question for now and us. Jews didn't believe a message of Messiah on a cross, it was an offense, to Greeks it was foolishness, but Christ is the power of God to all He calls (1 Cor 1:23-24).

The arm of God in Isa 53 is another way to say the power of God, and that's what Paul says the word of the cross is and the gospel is (v. 18, Rom 1:16).

Salvation is by the power of the cross as the HS opens blind eyes

None of us believe the message we heard unless the Lord's power reveals it.

Who can believe the message *unless* the arm of God is at work in almighty power to reveal Christ to us? Don't look down on the Jews for rejecting the Lord and don't limit this to them, one verse before, 52:15 talks about many nations. So what follows is for us, too, we believe only by His revealing His arm to us. 52:10 *'The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.'*

Salvation is Yeshua, which later became a proper name, translated as Jesus. Seeing the salvation of God is seeing Yeshua, seeing and believing in Jesus.

Isa 51:9 *'put on strength, O arm of the LORD...'* imagery of strength, power. So what powerful truths does God want to reveal to the world about Jesus?

1. The deity of Jesus. In Isa 53:1, *'arm of Yahweh'* identifies with Yahweh. Think of an arm. It's inseparably joined, it's a personal part of who God is He reveals. Yahweh wants us to see His arm, Yeshua, has descriptions only used of Yahweh, aka the LORD God. If you look back at 52:13, He calls all to behold His servant in what He'll do, and God says *'he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted.'* That's language only used of God in Isaiah:

- 6:1 *'I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up ...'*

- 57:15: *'the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy...the LORD...my God...'* (v. 19 and 21 parallels)

- When the end of v. 13 here says Yahweh's servant will be exalted, we know He can't be a mere man, because Isa 2 says any man who's lifted up or exalted will be humbled, *'Yahweh alone will be exalted'*³

- There's only 1 God, but 3 persons, Father and Son are inseparable. Isa 40-48 is clear there's 1 true God and He shares glory with none. This Servant shares God's exclusive glories so He can only be God.

#2. The humanity of Jesus. He's not only the arm of Yahweh, the power of God revealed connected with Yahweh Himself, right after Isa 53:1 mentions His powerful arm, the next phrase is a surprising contrast in v. 2: *'he grew up before him...'* That's a normal word for man growing up, starting young. He's planted and needing development and growth like all life does. v. 2 is very down to earth, He's rising naturally in the soil of a human family tree.

People asked *'is not this the carpenter's son?'* (Mt 13:55). But He's God's Son, God the Son growing up before the Father. Fully God, fully human, as Isa 7:14 and 9:6 say Messiah will be born as the Mighty God, God with us.

This arm of the Lord in Isa 51 is the mighty strength of God that delivered through the Red Sea, so in Isa 53 we expect big power but get a little plant.

#3. The humility of Jesus. v. 2 *'...as a young plant'* (NAS 'tender shoot').

NET *'He sprouted up like a twig before God...'* It's a word for little sprout, according to scholars and smart guys, it's the word for a suckling, 'normally unwanted shoot that springs up from the exposed root of a tree. It is a matter of seconds for the gardener to snip it off.'⁴ That's humility and vulnerability

Jesus came in a lowly way as a little one born to peasants in a little village. He was initially an unwanted pregnancy on the part of Joseph, His life was in danger of being cut off after birth by Herod, He was tender to suffering of others in His life, and in death His flesh was broken for us on the cross. Isa 6 promised judgment on Israel's rejection of the Lord, leaving *'like...an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled.'* *The holy seed is its stump'* (v. 13). Isa 11 said *'There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse...'*

We have some oak stumps on our property that have fallen, some with twig or tiny tender shoot sprouts. They picture the humble beginnings of Messiah

Isa 11 adds *'...from the stump...a branch from his roots shall bear fruit...'*

Isa 53:2 is similar *'and like a root out of dry ground [or 'parched ground']*.

We know about dry ground in our county, and any plant struggles to live in those conditions. Roots need water. This one is uncared for, un-watered and unwanted, unexpected to grow or go on living. Jesus was lowly in humility.

#4. The veiled majesty of Jesus. end of v. 2 ‘...he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.’

He wasn't like King Saul in OT times, or David's oldest brother Eliab

Majesty = outward impressiveness expected of a royal or important person.

He didn't have the build of a warrior-king. They saw no beautiful Savior. It wasn't like the pictures where you can tell who Jesus is, the one with a glow and halo (and beautiful gold hair and blue eyes). He was a normal Middle Eastern man, not too tall, probably darker than some of us but not especially handsome. He didn't look the part (*is this the carpenter's son?*) His majesty He veiled. Our 4 points match 4 gospels in reverse order, working backward

Veiled majesty – Matthew reveals Jesus as King – ‘behold your king’

Humility – Mark reveals Jesus as humble a servant – ‘behold the servant’

Humanity – Luke reveals Jesus as Son of Man – ‘behold the man’

Deity – John reveals Jesus as God the Son – ‘behold your God’

Those behold statements are 4 prophecies of Christ in Isaiah and Zechariah:

Behold your God – Isa 40 v. 9 says that in the context of Christ's coming

John 20:28 is Thomas beholding Jesus as ‘my Lord and my God!’

Behold the man – Zech 6:12 says in a Messiah context ‘Behold, the man...’

Luke 21:27 – ‘you will see the Son of Man...’

Behold the servant – Isa 52:13 is the intro to Isa 53 ‘behold my servant’

Mark 10:45 says He came not to be served, but to serve as a servant

Behold your king – Zech 9:9 ‘Behold your king is coming to you...humble’

Matthew 21:5 culminates Palm Sunday quoting ‘Behold your king’

The NT unveils to believers His majesty, the King they didn't see in Isa 53:

Meekness and majesty manhood and deity, In perfect harmony the Man who is God

Lord of eternity dwells in humanity, Kneels in humility and washes our feet...

Wisdom unsearchable, God the invisible, Love indestructible in frailty appears

Lord of infinity stooping so tenderly, Lifts our humanity to the heights of His throne

O what a mystery meekness and majesty, Bow down and worship for this is your God⁵

Behold His deity, humanity, humility, veiled majesty, now **#5 His agony**

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.* (esteem is accounting term, counted as nothing, zero)

That first word *despised* is used of Goliath despising David with demeaning derogatory language. Isa 49:7 prophesied Jesus ‘*deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant...*’ Later in Isa 53:3 it says His despising would be like one from whom men hide their faces (ancient Jews saw lepers like that, horrible in appearance, ch 52 says His face would be marred as if inhuman). This isn't saying He was ugly or deformed, He was perfect, but on the cross is the context, His face beaten to a bloody pulp, He's *despised and rejected*. This is His agony at Calvary, but His agony actually began in Gethsemane.

He said ‘my soul is very sorrowful, even to death...’ (Mt 26:38)

Lk 22:44 ‘*being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground*’ (agony facing the cup of wrath). Luke also uses agony for the death Jesus experienced hours later (Acts 2:24 NIV), and he uses that word agony for the punishment of hell (Lk 16:24-25 NIV). Jesus experienced every sense of ‘agony’ on the cross for us

In v. 3 NAS says ‘*forsaken of men...*’ We sang earlier of ‘Jesus forsaken... such anguish none can know. Christ, God's beloved, condemned as though His foe.’⁶ He came to His own, but His own did not receive Him, and to this day so many Jews despise and reject Him. David Baron, one Jew who came to believe in Jesus wrote a book about this chapter, The Servant of Jehovah:

‘through the centuries no Name has provoked such intense abhorrence among the Jews as...Jesus. I have known personally the most amiable and lovable characters among the Jews; but immediately the name "Jesus" was mentioned, a change came over their countenances, and they would fall into a passion of anger. In the course of my missionary experiences these past thirty five or forty years, how often has it been my lot to

witness some of my people almost mad with rage—clenching their fists, gnashing their teeth, and spitting on the ground at the very mention of the Name...

Israel's attitude to our Lord Jesus may be gathered also from their literature. In the... Talmud and more modern productions, the... precious name Yeshua... has been changed into "Yeshu," made up of initial letters which mean, "Let His name and His memory be blotted out."... often styled "the Transgressor" and "the hanged one"... "the accursed one"... His works are still ascribed to witchcraft and Beelzebub; His gospel... is called "the sinful or mischievous writing"; while Rabbi[s put] daily public prayer in the most solemn part of their liturgy, that "the Nazarenes" may, together with all apostates, "be suddenly destroyed," without hope, and be "blotted out of the book of life!" ... how literally the prophetic forecast has been verified and how deep-seated and mysterious Jewish hatred has been to Him...

Let it be remembered also that... is partly to be traced to the sufferings which they have endured at the hands of so-called Christians... by apostate persecuting Christendom in the dark ages and since... Neither is it to be forgotten that... there has always been a [believing] remnant in the nation¹⁷

But Isa 53 isn't just for one nation. He is *rejected by men*, v. 3 says, man-kind, humanity. We've seen the agony of Jesus, we need to see as we close:

#6. Our responsibility to Jesus

RECOGNIZE AND REPENT OF OUR SIN. We'll see next week in v. 5 '*...our transgressions...our iniquities...*' And in a few weeks in Isa 55 we see repenting of our sin, that's the verse on our sign off N. Shingle Road: '*seek ye the Lord while He may be found*' (v. 6 KJV). Here's more of it: *call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon....come to me...that your soul may live*¹⁸

Those promises of Isa 55 apply to you if you believe Isa 53 applies to you.

We have to see our sin is part of this, how deep it is, and that only the arm of the Lord can pull us out. Starting in v. 1 we must own our sin of unbelief when we don't trust and obey. Confess to Jesus 'I believe Lord, but help my unbelief.' Confess with v. 2 if we don't see His majesty or desire His beauty as we should. Or with v. 3 have you been rejecting Him or what He says on some level? I look at the end of v. 3 and see I'm not esteeming Him enough.

There's good news as we do that, that's how ch 52 introduced this section as good news, and it said this Servant would sprinkle many nations. Christ's blood is applied to us, not just 1 nation. Praise God Isa 53 applies to us and our sin Jesus died for, amen? As we see the agony of the Man of Sorrows in v. 3, we need to see our sin and our Savior here. We sang 'O to see the pain written in your face' and 'O to see **my name** written in the wounds, through your suffering I am free!¹⁹ In a few minutes, we'll sing 'Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in **my place** condemned He stood.' If you believe that, you can sing it 'sealed **my pardon** with His blood, Hallelujah, what a Savior!¹⁰

2nd response: REMEMBER JESUS. Communion next week reminds us the Man of Sorrows, what a name, suffered all this for ruined sinners like us to reclaim. And Jesus calls redeemed sinners to remember His gospel truths.

Lest I forget Thy thorn-crowned brow...Lest I forget Gethsemane;
Lest I forget Thine agony; Lest I forget Thy love for me, Lead me to Calvary.

Remember Acts 2 says '*But God raised Him up again, **putting an end to the agony of death**, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power*' (v. 24 NAS). Remember the scripture says for believers in Christ, death has lost its sting. Remember the Man of Sorrows and you won't sorrow as the rest of the world does without hope. Grieving believing friend, remember v. 3 says Jesus is acquainted with grief (or NIV says 'familiar with suffering').

Next week we'll see in v. 4 how He bears and carries all those things for us.

If you've felt rejected, unheard, unwanted, unappreciated, uncared for, look to Jesus in this text. If you've felt after all you've done you've been treated wrongly, maybe in family, maybe in ministry, maybe even criticized as you try to serve the Lord; behold this Servant and what He endured for that sin-- and your sin. If you don't feel esteemed by your spouse or one you live with or work with, remember Jesus was esteemed not by those He

lived with and worked with. Maybe you feel despised by men who hide their face from or at least try to avoid you, or maybe it's hard for you to look at someone here.

Let's remember Jesus, '*fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who **for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne...***' (Heb 12:2 NAS).

Remember Hebrews says we can go to that throne of grace with confidence or boldness to '*receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*' Why? It says remember Jesus is '*able to sympathize with our weakness...in every respect...tempted as we are...*' and it says '*because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted*' (Heb 2 & 4)

Hallelujah, what a Savior, amen? The arm of the Lord has been revealed to us today, and the power of the Lord arms us for suffering. Isa 40:10 '*the Sovereign LORD...will rule with a **powerful arm**... He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs **in his arms**, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother...with...young*' (NLT). What a Savior! The one who grew up as a little plant tenderly cares for His people in need.

Remember Isa 53:2 is not how He is now. He's no longer an unimpressive, undesirable, unappealing tiny shoot or dried out root in the earth. Isa 11 said the '*Root of Jesse...shall stand as a banner to the people; For **the Gentiles shall seek Him**, And His resting place shall be **glorious***' (11:10 NKJV). Isa 4 said to future believers in Jesus '*the branch of the LORD shall be **beautiful and glorious***' (v. 2). In His earthly kingdom to come Isa 33 says '*there the LORD **in majesty** will be for us a place of broad rivers and streams...*' v. 21.

When He comes our glorious King...anew His song we'll sing, Hallelujah!

¹ Charles Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 49:189.

² NIV.

³ v. 12, 17, compare ESV, NIV, Lexham English Bible.

⁴ John Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, p. 382.

⁵ Graham Kendrick, "Meekness and Majesty."

⁶ Chris Anderson, "His Robes for Mine."

⁷ David Baron, *The Servant of Jehovah: The Sufferings of the Messiah and the Glory that Should Follow (An Exposition of Isaiah 53)*, (Zondervan, 1954 reprint), p. 75-77.

⁸ v. 6-7, 3 NIV.

⁹ Getty Music, "The Power of the Cross."

¹⁰ Philip Bliss, "Hallelujah! What a Savior!"