

Isaiah 53 The Suffering Servant – Part 6

Last week, I told you that one of the reasons we are investing so much time in Isaiah 53 is because the Bible itself proves it is an important chapter.

Isaiah 53 is one of the most quoted passages of the Old Testament by the New Testament writers.

I had mentioned some of the New Testament books that refer to Isaiah 53:

Matthew Mark Luke John Acts Romans 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, 1st Timothy, Titus, Hebrews, 1st Peter and 1st John

Because the New Testament writers so often refer to this chapter, we can surmise with confidence that it is an important passage.

I want to encourage all of you

to go through these the New Testament cross-references.

I'm sure after you do so that you too will be convinced like I am that Isaiah 53 deserves our undivided, closest attention.

No other Old Testament passage I believe so convincingly applies to Jesus as Isaiah 53 does.

Before we continue, let us take a quick stock of what we have learned so far, **starting with vs. 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.

Peter also references this passage,

For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

1 PETER 2: 25

Both passages indicate that, we have gone astray.

That means we have rebelled against God.

Just like Adam and Eve,

just like Cain,

just like the Israelites in Old Testament,

just like the Jews in the Old Testament and the New Testament,

we – all of us -- like sheep have gone astray.

What does it mean to go astray?

The New Testament gives us the answer.

Paul says,

ALL HAVE GONE ASTRAY, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE." Romans 3:12

According Paul to go astray is to become useless to God.

Paul making reference from several passages of the OT says,

"no one is good."

How many of you think you are a good person?

According to the Bible – no one is good!

Not even one!

All of sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

We are all sinners –

liars and thieves and murderers, etc.

And that is why, we need a shepherd – an overseer of our soul.

If we repent of our sins and

in faith turn to the good Shepherd, Jesus Christ,

He will protect. He will oversee our soul till the very end.

We can trust in Him!

Isaiah 53:6 also says that "the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

You see, our sins were laid on the innocent Jesus –

even though he is a good shepherd,

he became like a sheep to the slaughter

Jesus says,

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." John 10:11

And that's what He did for us –

He laid down his life for us on the cross, on Calvary!

Why did He do this?

1 Peter 3:18 says, ... **Christ ... died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God 1 Peter 3:18**

The just for the unjust – the righteous for the unrighteous.

While we were yet sinners -- Christ died for us.

Who died for us?

The Son of God.

He died for us when?

While we were good?
No, while we were sinners!
While we were His enemies –
we were disobedient, rebellious –
just like Israel in the desert.
Yet, the Good shepherd, laid down his life, for wayward, straying sheep like us.

That, my friends, is true love – divine love: sacrificial, unconditional, unselfish love.

That's the God of Christianity. No other religion has a God that demonstrates his own love for us in this:
While we were still sinners, Christ died for us!
The just dying for the unjust, so that God – who is holy, holy, holy, -- could bring us to Him.

That is our God, a God of redemption,
a God of mercy, love, and grace.
What an amazing God!
What an amazing grace!
Vs. 7 adds to this amazingness in that,

The Servant Patiently Endured Suffering:
He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth. Isaiah 53:7

You see, this is quite amazing, human beings always – whenever we face unjust treatment –
when we are innocent but treated like the guilty –
we always plead our case,
we dispute unfair treatment,

and we lash out against authorities that are unjust.

If we are transgressed, if we have been unfairly harmed,

we demand a recompense,

we demand the guilty party be punished in accordance to the degree of harm, we have suffered.

Justice must be served –

This is called **Lex Talionis**

- the law of retaliation

- "eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth"

You see, the understanding of justice,
the Law – that which is right -- is written on our hearts.

As Paul says in Romans 2,

... for when Gentiles do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts. (Romans 2:14-15)

The human expression and the outworking of the law of retaliation can often be seen even right outside our church. Just a couple of blocks from us, at Gwanghwamun Square, up to hundreds of thousands of people gather there regularly for mass protests and demonstrations.

Are they there because they are happy?

No! Because of their discontentment they go out of their way, they set up tents and hold mass protests against something or someone they consider unjust.

And oftentimes tensions run high.

It is always noisy there because they want to publicly announce the injustice they are suffering.

But not Jesus

The suffering servant was silent.

1 Peter 2:23 says,

When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

You see, he did not retaliate.

When his enemies came to arrest him, Jesus said, "No, Peter! Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I leading a rebellion?"

And in court, he was silent. He did not defend himself

He was the most innocent man in the world – without sin –

yet amazingly he suffered like the most guilty man in history.

All without retaliation, without defending himself – all in silence.

He was beaten, whipped, pierced, and crucified.

That is our God – the God-man “Emmanuel,” God with us!

That is truly amazing grace – the amazing grace of Is. 53.

But let me tell you another point amazing about Isaiah 53.

Isaiah 53 makes prophecies that prove that the Bible is a divine book because only God – who is beyond time and space -- can predict the future with 100% accuracy.

Let us look at some of the prophecies from Isaiah 53 that came true:

Isaiah 53:1

The Messiah's own people would not believe he was the Christ.

Isaiah 53:3

God's Servant, the Messiah, would be rejected by people.

Isaiah 53:4

God's Servant, the Messiah, suffered for the sins of others.

Isaiah 53:5

God's Servant, the Messiah, would be beaten and wounded.

Isaiah 53:7

God's Servant, the Messiah, remained did not argue with those who were accusing him.

Isaiah 53:9

God's Servant, the Messiah, would be buried in a rich man's grave.

Isaiah 53:9

God's Servant, the Messiah, would die with the wicked even though he was innocent.

Isaiah 53:10

God's Servant, the Messiah, would be resurrected and live forever.

Other than Jesus, no other person in history perfectly fulfills all the prophecies of the suffering Messiah made in Isaiah 53.

It is truly amazing that the Bible, 700 years before the arrival of the Messiah, perfectly prophesied everything in Isaiah 53, not to mention the many other prophecies listed in the OT coming true. If you were to look at the prophecies of the Bible scrupulously, you would be astonished at the authenticity of the Bible and you would affirm that only God, not man, is the author – the source.

However, I would be remiss in my duty as a pastor if I just left you dazzled by how the Bible could make accurate prophecies hundreds of years before they happen.

The reason is this, leaving you dazzled wouldn't solve the biggest problem you have. God didn't leave us with the Bible so you could be merely impressed by it – “Wow, the Bible got it right! Yes, God must know the future!”

It's true the Bible gets it right 100% of the time but there's something much, much bigger and much, much more important than just predicting the future.

That which is much bigger and more important is found in the answer to a question.

It is the question of all questions.
It is the most important question in your life.

Does anyone know what it is?

The most important question:

How can a sinner be right – be justified -- in front of a holy, righteous God?

If you are not holy – as God is holy – the bad news is that you will be cast out eternally. You will be eternally separated from God's gracious, loving, life-giving presence. Because where God is – heaven –

there is no sin.

There is no pain, no suffering, no tears, no hatred, no crime, no lying; just peace, perfection, joy, love, and eternal life.

Sin is what causes pain, suffering, hatred, crime – and ultimately death.

And sin is what prevents peace, perfection, joy, love, etc.

Sin is like cancer – it metastasizes and spreads and makes things worse and ultimately you die.

So if just one sin were to enter heaven,

it would cause havoc like cancer and heaven would no longer be heaven.

That is why sinners like you and I cannot enter God's holy presence.

Now do you see why the question "how can sinners be justified in front of a holy God" is the question fall of us need to seriously consider?

Despite it's importance,

it is unfortunately the question that is avoided the most in your daily conversations.

Can you imagine tomorrow at work or at school,

you asking your colleagues,

have you ever thought about how a sinner like yourself can be justified in front of a holy God?

I'm sure, if you were to ask your colleagues that question,

it would get awkward very quickly.

So it's the question that people avoid –

or better yet,

it's the question people never consider.

BUT they should.

In fact, according Pastor J. MacArthur and Pastor Skip Heitzig,

if you were to do a google search of "what is the most important question in the world?" you would not find "how can sinners be justified in front of a holy God?" on the search results.

The most important question in the world is not found on Google. That's tragic!

That means we human beings are not interested in this most-important question.

How can sinners be made right – be justified -- with a holy God so as to escape eternal hell and enter eternal heaven?

The reason this question is more important than any other question in the world is that when you die, you will stand in front of a holy judge - namely, God – and you will account for all your sins.

... people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment

Hebrews. 9:27

So the answer to the question "how can a sinner be right in front of a holy, righteous God?" determines our eternity – where we go after we die.

More important than how you live, is how you die.

The Bible's primary function is to answer that question.

Do you know which book of the NT is considered to be the best, the most descriptive and most detailed in answering this question?

I'll give you a hint.

We are currently reading this Book in our Bible Study --

Romans.

It is often said that Isaiah 53 is the abridged version of Romans.

And Paul gave the same answer to our question as Isaiah 53 did.

Let us look at Isaiah 53:10,11 first, for the answer:

Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Isaiah 53:10, 11

So how can sinners be right – justified -- in front of a holy, righteous God?

Let us go to Paul in Romans, who makes reference to the righteous servant of Isaiah 53.

Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. Rom. 5:18,19

This passage reminds me of a story by John MacArthur entitled "Eternal Harmony."

Over the past 25 years, I've read this story over a hundred times.

Once upon a time, there was a great tribal leader, the greatest of all chief.

In order to help his people live safely and peacefully, he made just laws for his people.

The leader was a man of justice so he enforced those laws strictly.

But in spite of the laws, there were still problems.

One day, someone complained that someone in the tribe was stealing, so the chief called all the people together. "You know that the laws are for your protection, to help us live safely in peace," he reminded them, his eyes heavy with sadness because of his love for his people.

"This stealing must stop. The penalty has been increased from ten to twenty lashes from the whip for the person caught stealing."

But the thief continued to take things that didn't belong to him, so the leader called all the people together again.

"Please hear me." He pled with them. "This must stop. It hurts us all and makes us feel bad about each other. The penalty has been increased to thirty lashes."

Still, the stealing continued. The leader pleaded, "Please, I'm begging you. The stealing is causing us all great pain! I must increase the penalty to forty lashes from the whip."

The people knew of their tribal leader's great love for them.

A tear fell down his face as he dismissed the people.

Finally, a man announced, "the thief had been caught." Everyone gathered to see who it was.

"HUH" A single gasp raced through the crowd as the thief emerged between two guards. The tribal leader's face fell in shock and grief.

The thief was the chief's very own mother, old and frail.

What will he do? Would he uphold the law or would his love for his mother win over it? The people waited, holding their breath.

Finally their leader spoke. "My beloved people" His voice broke.

"It is for our safety and our peace. There must be forty lashes; the pain this crime has caused is too great."

With his nod, the guard led his mother forward. One gently removed her robe to expose a bony and crooked back.

The guard stepped forward and began to brandish his whip.

At the same moment, the tribal leader removed his robe as well, exposing his broad strong shoulders. He approached his mother and tenderly wrapped his arms around his dear mother, shielding her back with his own body.

He whispered gently against her cheek, "I love you."

His tears blended with hers. "I forgive you!" He nodded once more at the guard, and the whip came down again and again.

A single event, yet in it love and justice found an eternal harmony.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:23 proves this was a harmonious event of justice and love.

You see, 2000 years ago Jesus, much like the chief did, did the same thing for us. Each and everyone of us is that thief, but He loved us so much – he took our penalty, our punishment – even though we are sinners.

He sacrificed his body -- as that tribal leader did for his sinful mother, Jesus protects us. His broken and bloody body for us paid the wages of our sin on the cross. He died on Calvary, on Golgotha.

... my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Isaiah 53:11 He did this for all of us.

Praise God for the suffering servant that saved the day for us.

Let us Pray!

