

Servant Jesus

Isaiah 53

Trinity Presbyterian Church

27 Dec. 2020

What a blessing the Christmas season is! In the midst of the dark and cold of winter, a season of warm fellowship and lights strung on houses and trees. In the midst of worry about viruses and politics, economy and taxes, heating bills and credit card bills - the joy of singing Christmas songs, exchanging gifts, and family times.

At least that is usually what we look forward to and enjoy this time of year. Twenty twenty has been a strange year, indeed. Many folks this year were not able to gather with family. Many are mourning the departure of loved ones. Education has been interrupted. Many have lost jobs and savings so weren't able to do the things they would normally enjoy - travel, gifts, family gatherings....

These are just the cultural and traditional things we usually enjoy at Christmas time. But Christmas has a much deeper meaning. In fact, it divides history into BC - Before Christ - and AD - Anno Domini - the Year of our Lord. It is celebrating Jesus' first advent, when He came as a baby, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

Jesus, the very Son of God, very God of very God, begotten, not made. With God the Father from the beginning, for we read that by Him and through Him and for Him was everything made that was made. The second person of the Trinity. God Himself who took on flesh to live among us, a man among mankind. He grew up physically, socially, mentally, and spiritually just like any of us. Like us in every respect - except He had no sin.

Jesus was not just a tourist, come from heaven to see what life on earth was like. He came to seek and save the lost. He came to show us God Himself, for He said that if you have seen me, you have seen the Father. He came to heal and proclaim the Way to eternal life. He came to BE that way, for He also said, I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life. In fact, Jesus was born to die.

The rest of us are born to live. Yes, we eventually die, but our purpose in being born is to live to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Jesus was already doing that in heaven before He was born as a baby. The reason for His birth was that He might grow up and die a grizzly death on that horrible Roman instrument of torture and death - the cross. Mark 10:45 tells us that *He came not to be served, but to serve and to **give His life** as a ransom for many.* Again in Titus 2:13 and 14 we read, *Jesus Christ... **gave Himself** for us to redeem us from*

*all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

The purpose of Jesus' life was to die FOR us, to pay the sin debt WE owed to God the Father. He was sent by the Father, to serve the Father's will - for even Jesus in His passionate prayer to Father God on the night of His betrayal prayed, *nevertheless, not my will but yours be done.*

In short, Jesus was a Servant serving not only His Father and ours, but also serving US as He lived and died and rose again to secure our eternal salvation. Jesus is referred to in prophecy, gospels, poetry, and letters to the early churches as Servant.

In the first chapter of Isaiah - and the following 38 chapters, we read of God's warnings and judgment on idolatrous, adulterous Israel. They are to listen to Him and from that listening, they are to learn His will, obey and worship Him. The focus changes in chapter 40 moving from judgment to God's majesty. From listening, we are to move to speaking words of comfort to God's people - comfort based on God's Word and character and standing on the foundation of His promises. God's promises come into sharper focus now in this 3<sup>rd</sup> section of Isaiah where Jesus is referred to as Servant in Isaiah chapters 42, 49, 50 and 53. This is what is true about Jesus. What does that mean for us today at the close of a very troubling year - and the threshold of a new year?

We will read the entire chapter 53 of Isaiah, 12 verses. Listen for several key words that begin with "S" - it will help you remember these main ideas as we unpack this passage.

In verse 11 of Isaiah 53 we read "*By His knowledge, my righteous **Servant** shall justify many for He shall bear their iniquities.*" So, how do we know this is talking about Jesus? What is the knowledge referenced and how does this knowledge justify? What does it mean to justify? And just who is justified? We need to answer these questions before we can go ahead for they are foundational to the message of this chapter and our message this morning.

How do we know this verse is talking about Jesus? For one, this whole chapter is about Jesus and His work, His life, His sacrifice for us. But - Jesus is never mentioned by name, so, again, how do we know this is referencing Jesus? I just read on a Jews for Jesus website that said the Jews leave this chapter out of their worship readings because it so obviously refers to the Christ! We will see as we go along this morning further evidence that this reference to the Servant is indeed talking about Jesus, the Christ.

The knowledge referenced can be read either as "the knowledge of the Servant" - the knowledge we have of Him from Scripture - or "the Servant's knowledge" - referring to His

knowledge of God's plan for saving His people. Either way, we, His chosen people, are justified, made right with God. How? Because Jesus bore our iniquities on the cross, thus paying the due penalty for all our sin. ONLY Jesus did that. ONLY Jesus could do that as the perfect God/Man.

The Servant in verse 11 is, indeed, Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, our Saviour. Let's see how this plays out in the rest of the chapter.

**Because Jesus is Servant, His followers must also serve.** (v. 11 and Jn. 13:14-17) Jesus is identified as the Servant in verse 11 and in John 13, verses 14 to 17 we read that after Jesus washed His disciples' feet He said, "*You should **do as I have done**. ... If you know these things, blessed are you if **you do them**."* If we know Jesus we are to follow Him. Jesus is the Servant seen, substitute, scorned, suffering and satisfied. These are the "S" words seen in Isaiah 53 - the key ideas. Again - Jesus is the **Servant seen, substitute, scorned, suffering and satisfied**. How does what Jesus IS impact and direct how we serve Him and others? Let's see....

First of all, how do we **see** Servant Jesus? Or do we? I would hope that most within the sound of my voice have seen Jesus and responded to His gospel call by trusting Him. But not everybody does see Him. And many who do ignore Him, deny Him, or refuse to bow to His authority.

The first 3 verses of this chapter show us this has always been the case. How enamored we are of human power, technology, plans, and abilities! We are eager to see and put to use the latest cell phone or computer. We are eager to see our own political party in power pushing forward our own agenda. We are eager to see our plans for business, education, and family come to fruition.

Yet we are blinded by Jesus' evident frailty. After all, who wants to follow a servant who is like a tender shoot or a plant struggling to grow in dry ground? Who wants to follow somebody who has no evident physical beauty; somebody who has been rejected and isn't the life of the party? Why didn't Jesus come as a conquering king satisfying all our dreams and ambitions? Why didn't Jesus come in great splendor in an amazing demonstration of power with a frightful army? Instead, God sent His Son to be born of a poor young couple in a feeding trough in a barn! Who's going to follow a servant like that?

Nobody - of their own accord! It's only when the strong arm of God the Father reaches down into us and does CPR on our lifeless hearts, bringing us to life, granting us faith, and drawing us to Himself that we then see Jesus - humble, gentle, gracious, but also Just Judge, King of Kings, the One to whom all authority in heaven and earth has been given. The One worthy

of honor, glory, and worship. The One and only One who can save us from the just judgment of our sin. Have you seen Servant Jesus? The evidence is clear. Have you trusted Him? Just acknowledging Him as an historical figure isn't enough. We must trust that He has done, is doing and will do as He has promised - and submit our whole life to him - our minds, hearts, wills, passions, interests and relationships. Are you following Him? In every area of your life? Willing to serve Him even as He has served you?

And do you know WHY you must follow Servant Jesus? Because, as Servant to the Father and to us, He is our **substitute** as we see in verses 4 through 6. Look at the pronouns that point to us and our need for Him - our griefs, our sorrows, our transgressions, our iniquities.... What does He do about those enormous needs? He was chastised, wounded, rejected and carried all our iniquities - to the cross. Yes, for US, He died to appease God's just judgment for our sins. He, the perfect, sinless Son of God voluntarily gave Himself to pay that awful price.

Have you ever been accused of something you didn't do? It doesn't feel good, does it? That accusation can ruin a relationship, spoil your name, discourage you and lead to all sorts of emotional, spiritual, and social turmoil. Sometimes that untrue accusation can go as far as going to court. Standing before the judge awaiting sentencing for something you didn't do - a sentence of years in prison, great financial cost, and complete loss of face in the community - all you want is justice. You would give anything if your position before the judge could be substituted by the one who wrongly accused you.

That is something like what it is when we stand accused before God and Jesus steps in to take our place, to substitute himself for us. Except God's accusations against us are true and we deserve His just sentence - of death and eternal punishment. But when Jesus steps in, He takes upon Himself ALL our guilt, shame, embarrassment, and sin and pays the price for us - completely!

So what do we do with this? Sit back and say, "Whew! Got outa' that!" or respond to Jesus' saving grace with a life of gratitude? Gratitude expressed in loving God and serving Him in praise and worship and faithful, fruitful living. Gratitude expressed in loving our neighbor, our family, our co-workers through the service of forgiving them even as we have been forgiven. Loving service of extending to others the grace of assuming the best, the grace of asking forgiveness where you have wronged, the grace of speaking in kindness and truth. There are so many ways to serve those around us. Who can YOU serve today with a comforting word, an encouragement, a word of thanksgiving or praise? How can you better be God's servant as you follow Servant Jesus?

Look at the next 3 verses now - verses 7 through 9 - and you'll begin to see HOW Servant Jesus **suffered** as He died for your sins and mine. Even though He was oppressed and afflicted, He didn't open His mouth to complain or to defend Himself. He went quietly to the awfulness that awaited Him. He was kept in prison, as it were, all night while He suffered the indignity of an illegal trial on trumped up charges. He was cut off in His prime, never having fathered any physical children. He was killed for God's people - He didn't die for any sins of His own. They hung Him between two thieves and would have buried Him in a pauper's grave except for the intervention of rich Joseph of Arimathea who placed His body in his own tomb. Jesus faced a very undignified death with great dignity.

How do you respond when somebody does something to you that seems unjust, unfair? Our usual response is to cry, "That's not fair!" and to seek justice by any means. We try to ruin the other person by gossip, shunning, or even taking them to court. If we are to follow Servant Jesus, should we not rather suffer injustice than to take our complaint to court? Paul adjures the Corinthians, *"It is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you rather not accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated?"*

We are not to be doormats. Paul stood up for his rights as a Roman citizen when about to be whipped. In our dealings with each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, we must follow Servant Jesus extending to others the grace He has so generously poured out on us, extending to others the forgiveness with which He has forgiven us with great suffering.

Have you ever really suffered simply because you are a follower of our suffering servant Jesus? Yes, we have all suffered from physical ailments, family disappointments and squabbles, financial set-backs and many other ways. But few of us have been called to suffer because we trust Jesus. None of us has had to suffer death for our faith. Part of that lack of suffering is because of the country and culture we are part of where we are free to be followers of Jesus. Part of it may be, though, that we don't live for Jesus radically enough to draw attention to Him in our lives. As somebody has said, if you were accused in a court of law for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

While we aren't to look for suffering, we must be so committed to the Christ who suffered for us that we would be willing to suffer financial loss, loss of freedom, loss of reputation and work - even loss of life - to give glory to Him in thanks for all He's done for us. Any suffering we may be called to do for Him in this life is light and momentary when compared to the awesome wonder of spending eternity with our Savior!

Just as Jesus' birth was the culmination of a great plan of God from before creation, so His death - and its accomplishment - was also part of God's great plan. And in accomplishing that

plan, completing it, Servant Jesus knew great **satisfaction**. The last triplet of verses - verses 10 to 12 - show us this. It pleased Father God to bruise His Son, to put Him to grief. How can that be?! Would any of us purposefully make our children die for another? Would any of us cause our child to suffer such great pain as Jesus did?

No - but we aren't God! And any reason we would have for putting our child through such torment would not accomplish a great and eternal plan. We are all sinners. We must all die for our own sins. We can't die for another. Only Jesus could do that. And when Servant Jesus obeyed His Father, it brought glory to God for His sacrificial, vicarious death was effective and sufficient meriting for us full payment for our sin debt.

God the Father rewarded His Son, Servant Jesus, for His faithful, obedient life and death. He gave Jesus countless spiritual offspring from every nation, tribe, family and language. He raised Him from the dead and brought Him in glory to reign by His side for all eternity - because He bore the sins of many and made intercession for us, the sinners, the transgressors. Just as God had planned from before the beginning of time.

Oh, how we, servant followers of Servant Jesus, have benefited from His costly obedience! Because of Jesus' righteousness credited to our account, we are now forgiven, adopted, made new, given eternal life and the right to call God Abba, Father. We are counted as heirs and joint heirs with Jesus. And though we may die, He has promised us - and preceded us in - resurrection, new bodies, glorified bodies, spiritual bodies in which we will serve Him, reign with Him, and enjoy the new heaven and earth.

Magnificent truths. Truths too wonderful to fully comprehend. In the confidence and power of these truths that are applied to us through trusting Jesus, we must shout the good news from the roof tops! We must live lives of truth and dignity. We must, by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, put to death the old nature that still tries to trip us up. We must stand against the wiles of the devil and the lure of the world.

And as we live out this justification that is ours in Christ, we, too, will know the satisfaction of becoming more like Jesus in thought, word, and action. We will know the satisfaction of knowing that we belong to Jesus and nothing, no nothing, can separate us from Him. We will know the satisfaction of being able to give a reason for the hope that is in us. A hope that is not just wishful thinking. A hope that is sure and settled for it is a hope that rests on the sure promises of God - promises that are all YES and AMEN in Christ!

My friends, do you know Servant Jesus? Do you **SEE** Him? Have you given **Servant** Jesus, your **substitute**, your whole life surrendering to Him all that you have and are that He might make you pleasing to God? Have you acknowledged with confession and repentance how He has **suffered** for you that you might be cleansed and live? Are you enjoying the **satisfaction** of loving Him, worshiping Him, and **serving** Him?