

Suffering servant 2

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[0:00] Father God, we come to an enormously sobering passage, yet an important and wonderful passage that leads us to our salvation.

our God, the servant King. Lord, help us, we pray, so that you may equip us for our service of you. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Last Sunday morning, I was telling you how extraordinary I think it is that a little bear from the country of Peru who eats marmalade sandwiches and has an aunt called Lucy and wears a blue duffel coat and a red hat.

It's extraordinary that this bear has become such a national icon. He's everywhere and incredibly popular, has two hit movies, no, three hit movies and a musical in the West End.

It's extraordinary. And my thoughts about Paddington have continued this week. I want to share with you about Paddington 2. It's one of my favourite films ever.

[1:33] I think it's stunning. I'm sorry if there's spoilers here, but it's been out for a while. The plot of the film is basically this. Paddington wants to send a gift to his aunt Lucy for her birthday.

She lives in Peru. And he thinks, she's never been to London. I want her to see London, but she can't come. And so he discovers that in an antique shop, there's this 3D pop-up book of London. And he wants to buy it and send it to his aunt. But the trouble with that is, it's incredibly expensive. This little bear cannot afford to buy such a book.

And then as the film goes on, there's a thief who ends up stealing the book, but somehow Paddington is sort of around about the area and he gets caught red-handed.

He didn't steal the book. And yet it looks like he did. After all, he desperately wanted it. He would have done anything to get it.

[2:44] And so Paddington ends up in prison. And you watch it and you think, that's not fair. That's injustice. You need to find the real criminal.

This is an innocent little bear. And as we come to Isaiah 53, I think we should be saying the same thing.

This doesn't seem fair. This seems unjust. We read of an innocent lamb going to the slaughter. This lamb doesn't deserve it. This lamb's done nothing wrong. It goes silently and innocently to die. And so we should say, that's not fair. He didn't do it. We feel the injustice in this passage. We're continuing on from looking at this great portion of scripture.

[3:54] Continuing on from last week. Where we're introduced to this servant figure. And it's actually, as some of us on Wednesday night were considering, not the first time a servant's come up in the book of Isaiah.

You could read in chapter 41 of a servant. The servant there is Israel.

Israel, my servant, the Lord describes them as. And then you get to chapter 42 and you read the first of the four servant songs in the book of Isaiah.

And you read it and you think, well, surely Israel are meant to be this. But it doesn't feel like they have been and doesn't feel like they are going to be. Due to their sin.

And they're wandering like sheep. Away from the Lord. And so we scratch our heads and we wonder, who is this servant going to be?

[5:00] And last week we questioned that. Who is this servant? And we landed on, this must be the Lord Jesus Christ. The servant is God.

Verse 13 of chapter 52 says, he will be raised, lifted up, highly exalted. Words used of the Lord God Almighty in Isaiah chapter 6.

This seems to be God's. And then as we move forward to the New Testament and compare it to some of the things we read last week, we think that this is Jesus. Jesus, God come down in the flesh.

God come down and willing to humble himself even to death on a cross. God come down and willing to humble himself. So that's who we are reading of here.

And we see more of him and what he has gone through for us. And we begin in verses 4 to 6 and we see the swap.

[6:04] We see the swap. Look at what he takes up. Verse 4, surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering.

Verse 5, he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Jesus, the son of God, the one who knew no sin, the one who had been tempted and tried in every way and yet remains steadfast in his obedience to his father, takes on the pain and suffering of human beings. Pain and suffering due to our sin. Our transgressions, verse 5, our transgressions. Those times when we have knowingly been disobedient to God and his words.

He's taken on our iniquity, our immoral behavior that means we are guilty before the Lord God Almighty. And we know that it's talking about us.

We know that it's talking about human beings because of verse 6. We all. We all. Human beings.

[7:29] All. Every human without distinction is like this. Like sheep who have gone astray. And turn to our own way.

The scribe like one of these. A sheep who cannot stay in the good field that their farmer who knows and loves and cares for them has designed for them.

No, they wander and they stray. They stray onto the road. They stray into danger. And that's what human beings have done throughout history since the fall of Adam and Eve and the garden.

We have strayed from the good field of living for our God under his good rule.

We have gone to our own ways. Thought we could live life better without him. Thought we could make it on our own. Thought we could be independent people from our good creator.

[8:45] At home, our little son Micah has started crawling in the last couple of weeks. Which is very exciting. But it also means danger.

You suddenly find there is a lot of dangers in the house for a little nine-month-year-old crawling baby. And so we're trying to hide the wires in the lounge away from him.

We've installed these things. Gates on the kitchen door and on the lounge door. To keep him safe in one room.

So that he doesn't crawl off and try and clamber up the stairs. Or find something we've not thought of that's dangerous for him. But it's so interesting.

As soon as the gate goes up, he's suddenly like, Oh, gate. I want to get through that. That's blocking my way. And so he's managing to stand up and he's trying to see, Can I get myself over it?

[9:47] The other day was really funny. He threw a toy through there and he looked at me as if, Let me out. Let me get my toy. No, this gate's here for a reason. We want to keep you safe.

God's law, God's words are given to us for reason, To keep us safe, to help us live under the good rule of our holy gods.

But like Micah, we try and escape. We try and head out of the safety of living God's ways And make up our own way of living, Ignorant of all the dangers.

And to do so, To try and live life away from God, Is to our own destruction. Trying to live another way is an act of rebellion Against our good creator who offers us life, breath, and everything else.

And so the solution is, God himself has come down in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ To take up our sin.

[11:08] To take up our pain and suffering. To be pierced with nails For the transgressions we have committed. To be crushed under the weight of the wrath of his father For every evil deed and every bitter thought.

The word crushed there, It literally means being ground to the dust. The other day I had to ground some walnuts for Micah.

We're going through all the allergens, And we finally got to a nut where there is no nut butter. They even do a cashew butter, But not walnut butter as far as we can find.

So I had to ground up these walnuts, And they were just a dust. They didn't resemble anything like a walnut does. And that's a bit of a picture of what the Lord Jesus has gone through for us.

Crushed. Crushed under the weight of our sin. Crushed under the weight, The agonising weight of experiencing God's wrath On the wrongs we have done.

[12:27] And so no wonder, With that description being crushed, We read last week that In verse 14, His appearance is so disfigured beyond that of any human being, And his form marred beyond human likeness.

No wonder, He's described in his suffering, As beyond human like. Because of the crushing, Agonies that he went through for us.

And this all happens, Because Jesus chooses to swap places with us. End of verse 6, What was laid on him, Was the iniquity of us all.

Our sin, Our rebellion, Our guilt, Was laid upon him. It's an extraordinary swap.

Reminds me of these words, In the New Testament that Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, God made him who had no sin, To be sin for us, So that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

[13:45] An extraordinary swap, To achieve our salvation. And yet how do many people view this? Verse 4, Halfway down in verse 4, Yet we considered him punished by God, Stricken by him, And afflicted.

In Isaiah's day, Suffering was considered as a kind of divine, Divine payment, For sin. The greater suffering, The worse the person must have been.

Remember Job, A righteous man in the Bible, Has everything taken away from him. Awful suffering that he goes through.

And Job's friends, Who aren't particularly comforting to him, Say, Well, You must have done something terribly wrong. Need to confess. Confess it before God.

He's punishing you. And as Isaiah writes of such, A suffering man, People may think, Wow, He must have been pretty awful.

[15:01] He must have done something terrible to deserve this. And so people view it not, Not, Not, As God, Intends it to be.

They don't realise what's going on. And yet it's spelled out for us clearly here. What it's achieving, What it's achieving, Is that he is going through, The punishment that we deserve.

Verse 5, Halfway down, The punishment, That he faces, Brings us peace. It's achieving for us, Our peace, With God.

As he takes our sins and our sorrows, And makes them his very own. Because it should be us there, Facing that punishment. Because we have done wrong.

We do deserve that. And yet Jesus, The innocent one, Choses to swap places with us, And go through that, Awful, Agony on the cross, In order that we might know, God's peace.

[16:22] And by his wounds, We're told at the end of verse 5, We are healed. Healed to be made whole, To be made new, To be restored. No longer standing before God, As sinners, Who cannot stand.

But by the blood, Of the Lord Jesus, Which is sprinkled on us, We stand before him, As ransomed, Restored, Forgiven. Who like we, His praise should say.

You may have heard that, One of these phrases, Substitutionary atonement, Or penal substitution, Big phrases, In Christian theology, Christian study of God, That's what we're seeing here, In verses 4 to 6.

Atonement, That is to make amends, Correcting wrongs, But because God is so holy, And we are so sinful, We cannot make amends, Before such a holy God, We're told, All of us have fallen short, Of the glory of God, We're told the wages of our sin, Is death, But here Jesus, Is taking on our sins, In order to achieve, Our atonement, And penal, What does that mean?

That means penalty, Taking the penalty, Taking on the wrath, The death, That we deserve, For our sin, Jesus dies, On the cross, Facing the penalty, We should face, And he does so, As a substitute, Stands in our place, It's a bit like, We were all playing, A game of football, And we did something, So terribly wrong, On the pitch, That we got a red card, And we were sent off, Not able, Not worthy, To be on that pitch, Anymore, And the bad news was, Our team were losing, The match, But then

imagine, Jesus comes on, He's substituted, With another player, Who just, Is no good as well, And he comes on, He's the perfect substitute, And leads his team, To glory, Leads his team, To winning, Leads your team,

[18:56] To winning, And so you have, Something to celebrate, You've done wrong, You've been sent off, You weren't there, You weren't achieving, The win, But still you celebrate, Because Jesus has done it for you, That's what he's doing, On the cross, And so we can all celebrate, We can all praise God, And we can say, Hallelujah, What a saviour, These are extraordinary things, In verses four to six, And before we go on, To the next set of verses, I just want to, Do something slightly different, I want to read them out, I'm going to replace, The words are, And we, With, With my, And I, And I want us to, Sort of insert ourselves, And then, Individually into there, And then I just want, A pause for a minute or so, Just an opportunity for us,

Individually to thank God, For what he's done, And then we'll move on, To the next bit, Surely he took up, My pain, And bore my suffering, Yet I considered him, Punished by God, Stricken by him, And afflicted, But he was pierced, For my transgressions, He was crushed, For my iniquities, The punishment, That brought me peace, Was on him, And by his wounds, I am healed, I'm like a sheep, I've gone astray, And turned to my own way, And the Lord has laid on him, My iniquity, Let's just pause, And thank God, For what he's done for us, And that great swap, To the next bit, Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you for giving your son. Thank you for his willingness to stand in our place and bear the punishment that was to us so that we can go free.

[22:25] Thank you, Father. Amen. secondly we feel the injustice verses 7 to 9 and when we consider that all of us are sheep guilty sheep guilty wandering sheep it's extraordinary then to read that we see a lamb verse 7 he was oppressed and afflicted yet he did not open his mouth he was led like a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before it shearers his silence so he did not open his mouth it's a somber moment imagine the silence imagine the onlookers as they watch a little innocent lamb walking towards its slaughter not defending itself it's innocence clear for everyone to see and yet it goes it goes to be cut off from the land of the living do we feel the injustice of the swap here we should be there as wandering sheep gone astray instead a lamb is there and that's a picture of the lord jesus as he carries the cross up to the hill of calvary as he goes as the innocent one the one who never did any wrong who should just declare his innocence and yet he remains quiet even though he heads to the cross because people were full of all these false accusations he still remains quiet just over the next few minutes as we read bits of isaiah 53 i'm also going to read a few bits from matthew 27 so maybe worth having a finger in there it's page 998 in the church bibles let's just see that jesus really did remain silent at times on his trial matthew 27 verse 12 when he was accused by the chief priests and the elders he gave no answer then pilate asked him don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you but jesus made no reply not even to a single charge to the great amazement of the governor he was led like a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep is silent before its shearers say he was and in that i think we see his willingness to go there i think the lamb imagery is so important a lamb a sacrificial animal and jesus is introduced at the beginning of john's gospels behold the lamb of god come to take away the sins of the world but we also know that jesus wasn't simply a helpless victim of terrible injustice he goes silently but obediently and willingly to his father's plan of salvation for his people after all he is god who has authority to lay down his life and take it up again as he says in john's gospel i have authority to lay it down and

take authority to take it up again

i lay it down of my own accord Jesus went willingly he was willing to be the lamb of God in our place an unjust death a somber moment seeing the lamb walk into the slaughter and yet Jesus went willingly for lost sheep like you and i but it's extraordinary no one spoke up about this injustice verse 8 by oppression and judgment he was taken away yet who of his generation protested for he was cut off from the land of the living for the transgression of my people he was punished Matthew 27:22 what shall i do then with Jesus Pilate asked who is called the messiah they all answered crucify him why what crime has he committed asked Pilate but they shouted all the louder crucify him those weren't cries of protest those weren't cries of saying this is unjust don't do this these were cries of crucify him send him to his death and so the one who through whom the whole world was made was cut off from the land of the living the light of the world enters the darkness of death and the grave and we hear about the grave in verse 9 of this chapter he was assigned a grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death though he had done no violence nor was any deceit found in his mouth he was assigned a grave with the wicked you see the crucifixions they were for criminals and they didn't give the criminals a decent honorable burial rather they were sort of thrown into a rubbish heap of bodies and yet this also says he was also assigned a grave with the rich in his death those two things don't seem to go together and yet we make sense of them when we read towards the end of Matthew 27 in verse 57 these words as evening approached there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph who had himself become a disciple of Jesus going to Pilate he asked for Jesus' body and Pilate ordered that it be given to him

Joseph took the body wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock he rolled a big stone in front of the entrance of the tomb and went away Joseph a rich man provides his own new tomb expensive tomb for the Lord Jesus to have a rich burial with the rich in his death as verse 9 of Isaiah 53 speaks about because Jesus sees that sorry Joseph sees that Jesus is innocent he doesn't deserve to go through this injustice and so at least he must have some honour in his burial for he was the one who had done no violence nor was any deceit in his man

I'm not sure it's possible to look at these verses that we've looked at and not respond in some way we've read of the most gracious swap ever sinners who stand before a holy God who stand guilty before him find in this chapter one who was willing to pay the punishment we deserve in order to bring us to God and in doing so he faced the most unjust and cruel death imaginable so how will we respond to this perhaps you're here and you're hearing these things maybe for the first time maybe you're inquiring about Christianity do you see the great love that God has for you that he would lay down his life for you he offers you life in the

Lord Jesus Christ life you can receive today by calling out and saying Lord please forgive me for my sin forgive me because of what Jesus has done and if you want to know more do come back next Saturday evening and join us for that dessert night and a time to consider these things the more and next Sunday morning as well we'd love to have you back perhaps this morning you're a Christian but but you've been a bit like a wandering!

[32:09] Sheep of Leeds as one hymn writer wrote I'm prone to wonder I'm prone to leave the God I love this morning we've been reminded about the lengths our God has gone through for us the enormous unjust work that Jesus has done for you and he stands ready to welcome you back stands ready to hear you say Lord Lord I've wondered I confess my sin again to you help me to be following this extraordinary saviour help me in my weakness he's a gracious God and for all of us all of us who know the Lord Jesus to be our saviour we've just seen how incredible a saviour he is that he would go through all this for you and so surely it should lead us to be able to sing out these words loudly in great praise of Jesus the Nazarene wondering how could he love me a sinner condemned how unclean yet how marvellous how wonderful is my saviour's love for me so I'd invite us all to join in and sing these words as Phil comes to lead us in this hymn and then

Mark will close our time together in prayer ■ a