

AM Isaiah 52:13-53:12 An Amazing Saviour

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[0 : 00] is from the prophecy of Isaiah, the so-called suffering servant song, reading from chapter 52, verse 13, right through to the end of chapter 53.

Behold, my servant shall act wisely. He shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. As many were astonished at you, his appearance was so marred beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind. So shall he sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of him. For that which has not been told them, they see. And that which they have not heard, they understand. Who has believed what he has heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? 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. 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. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. And with his wounds we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and he was afflicted. Yet he opened not his mouth. Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death. Although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him. He has put him to grief. [3 : 40] When his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring. He shall prolong his days. The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied.

By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.

Because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors.

Yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors. Let us hear again from the word of God now.

1 Peter chapter 2 verses 13 down to 25. A passage in which he quotes from Isaiah 53.

[5 : 07] Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil, and to praise those who do good.

For this is the will of God, that by doing good, you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free.

Not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone.

Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect.

Not only to the good and gentle, but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.

[6 : 18] For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if, when you do good and suffer for it, you endure?

This is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you may follow in his steps.

He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued earnestly entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls. May the Lord bless his word to us.

[7 : 41] Let's come again. Let me ask you to turn please to Isaiah chapter 52 and 53.

We're going to be looking at the whole of this passage, though necessarily rather briefly. There's so much here, isn't there? We could easily preach a long series of sermons on this passage.

But I'll read again by way of text chapter 53 and verses 4 to 6. I do hope that my cough won't be too much of a distraction to you.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace.

[8 : 56] And with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Later on we will be meeting around the Lord's table. Remembering in the way that he himself commanded us the death of Christ.

And it seemed good in preparation for that that we should spend some time remembering exactly what it was that Christ did for us when he died on the cross.

There are thousands of texts that I could have chosen. Arguably the entire Bible is leading us to the cross.

But I've chosen this famous prophecy of Isaiah. Isaiah lived about 700 years before Christ.

[10 : 08] He lived in troubled times. There was moral decline within the land. There were military threats from outside. Isaiah moved in high circles.

He was involved in the events of his day. He was even asked to give advice to kings. His greatest interest though lay not in current affairs.

But in the events of the future. And in particular in the coming of the Messiah. God had revealed to Isaiah many deep things about the Messiah.

His birth in Isaiah 7. Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son. And shall call his name Emmanuel. His kingdom in Isaiah 9.

Unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given. And the government shall be on his shoulder. And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor.

[11 : 26] Mighty God. Everlasting Father. Prince of Peace. His miracles in Isaiah 35. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened.

And the ears of the deaf unstopped. But above all God had revealed to him. The death of the Messiah.

And his subsequent glory. Now this is the last of the four so-called servant songs.

From chapters 42 to 53. This particular one is known as the song of the suffering servant. It begins with a short introduction.

In chapter 52. Where Christ is introduced. As the servant of God. Behold my servant. And it then presents us with a paradox.

[12 : 30] The world will be astonished. To see Christ suffer. And yet.

The world. Will be saved by him. Chapter 53. Expands on that. And explains it. Giving both the reason.

And the results. Of his sufferings. So I want us to consider. This morning briefly. An amazing sight. An amazing sacrifice. And an amazing success. All of which adds up. To my title.

An amazing saviour. So first. An amazing sight. A suffering.

[13 : 28] Saviour. We have this right at the beginning. In chapter 52. Behold my servant. He says. He shall be high. And lifted up.

And shall be exalted. Well that's what you'd expect. Of the Messiah. Yet. Many. Were astonished at you. His appearance.

Was so marred. Beyond human semblance. And his form. Beyond. That of the children. Of mankind. That.

Wasn't. What you would expect. A marred. Disfigured. Messiah. Isaiah 53.

Then expands on that. Who has believed. What he's heard from us. It was simply incredible. He had no form. Or majesty. He says in verse 2. That we should look on him.

[14:23] No beauty. That we should desire him. He was despised. And rejected. By men. A man of sorrows. And acquainted. With grief. This is not.

What you might have expected. From the coming king. Yet this of course. Is what happened. Jesus was rejected.

Jesus was rejected. Throughout his life. And especially. At the cross. The religious rulers. Jeered at him. The crowds chanted. Crucify him.

Even his own disciples. Forsook him. And fled. Isaiah describes. In verses 4 to 6. In vivid detail. The sufferings of Christ. Christ. Pierced. Crushed. Chastised. Wounded. It's as if he were there.

[15:24] Watching our Lord. Being struck by the soldiers. Being scourged. With that metal tipped whip. That would tear through his flesh.

Pierced with those nails. Being hammered. And mercilessly. Through his hands. And his feet. Dying. In agony. Goes on to speak of him.

In verse 7. As oppressed. And afflicted. He was led as a lamb. To the slaughter. He says. He was treated unjustly. He was cut off.

In the prime of his life. He died alongside. The wicked. Crucified. Between. Two thieves. We need to appreciate.

Just how shocking. This would have been. To the Jews. Of Isaiah's time. We know the story. And to us.

[16:28] It's no longer shocking. It's exactly what we know. From the gospels. But imagine yourself. Back in Isaiah's day. The Messiah.

Whom you have been expecting. For centuries. The great king. Who is going to lead our people. This is going to happen to him. How can this possibly be?

Any attempt at illustration. Runs the risk of. Trivializing all this. But let me try.

Trevor. Often has illustrations. From football. And politics. So let me offer one of each. Suppose your favorite football team.

Has just signed. A brilliant new player. A Brazilian striker. For a hundred million pounds. Perhaps. We've just returned.

[17:31] From Madeira. And they all talk there. About Cristiano Ronaldo. He was born there. He owns a chain of hotels there. And there's even.

A museum to him there. Well suppose. Cristiano Ronaldo. Has signed for your team. And you're expecting. Great things from him. But then you're given.

A vision of the future. And you see him. Being booed off the pitch. And you see his own teammates. Kicking him. And insulting him. What's going on? Or to change the illustration.

Suppose whatever political party. You support. Has a new leader. Wonderful new leader. You're expecting great things. But then you're given. A vision of the future.

[18:30] And you see that glorious new leader. In court. Being accused. By his own MPs. Whatever.

Is going on. That's something of the shock. Of what Isaiah sees. The Messiah. The Messiah. On the cross. What's going on?

Now it's true. If you've read the Old Testament properly. And Isaiah had. There are prophecies. Of a suffering Messiah. Right from the beginning.

Genesis 3. Where it speaks. God speaks to Satan. And says. You shall bruise. His heel. Right at the start.

There's the prophecy. The Messiah will suffer. Psalm 22. From which we've sung. Earlier in that psalm. They pierced. My hands. And my feet.

[19:34] But there are many. Many more. Prophecies of glory. And the Jews. Attended to focus on that. Isaiah himself.

Had seen the Messiah. As the coming king. The government. Shall be upon his shoulder. So whatever is going on. That he should suffer.

Is it possible. That the Messiah. Has failed. In the two illustrations. I gave. That would be the most likely. Explanation. That the new footballer.

Or the new political leader. Has failed to live up to expectations. And he's quite rightly. Being rejected. That perhaps. Is what the people.

Thought. When they said. We esteemed him. Stricken. Smitten by God. But the truth. Is quite different. He was stricken.

[20 : 30] He was. Smitten. By God. But for totally. Different reasons. Which brings us. To our second point. An amazing.

Sacrifice. Verses. Four to six. Here we have. The reason. For his sufferings. And you could. Sum it all up. In two words. For.

Us. It was all. For. Us. He has. He has. Born. Our griefs. And carried.

Our sorrows. He was. Pierced. For. Our transgressions. Crushed. For. Our iniquities. The chastisement. That brought. Us. Peace. Was upon him. With his wounds.

We. Are healed. God. The truth is. That Christ suffered. For us. And in our place. Verse six.

[21 : 26] Puts it plainly. All we like sheep. Have gone astray. We have turned everyone. To his own way. And the Lord. Has laid on him. Him. The iniquity. Of us all.

The entire weight of it. The weight of every sin. That his people have committed. Quite simply.

He was suffering the punishment. That we deserved. We're all sinners. Every one of us. Yes. Every one. We deserve God's wrath.

But Christ was bearing God's wrath. Instead of us. This of course. Is the language of sacrifice. Isn't it?

He's even more explicit. In verse ten. Where he says. It was the will of the Lord. To crush him. He has put him to grief. When his soul.

[22 : 22] Makes an offering. For guilt. And verse eleven. He shall bear their iniquities. And verse twelve. He bore the sin of many. And makes intercession.

For the transgressors. He is both the sacrifice. And the priest. The New Testament takes up that theme repeatedly.

Jesus himself says in Mark ten forty five. Possibly quoting from Isaiah. The son of man came not to be served. But to serve. And to give his life. A ransom.

For many. Paul says in Romans five. While we were still weak. At the right time. Christ died. For. The ungodly.

That's not. For those people outside. It's for us. We are the ungodly. Yes the people outside as well. All of us.

[23 : 22] We are the ungodly. Christ died. For us. While we were sinners. Paul says. Christ died. For us.

Or again. Ephesians five. Christ loved the church. And gave himself up. For her. And still more personally. In Galatians two twenty.

The son of God. Loved me. And gave himself. For me. Peter says. He himself. Bore our sins. In his own body.

On the tree. And again. Quoting Isaiah. By his wounds. You have been healed. And again. Christ died. The just.

For the unjust. That he might bring us to God. John says. He is the propitiation. For our sins. Same thing. All the way through. The New Testament. Such a glorious theme.

[24 : 18] They can't stop talking about it. Now again. We need to. Take in. Just how. Amazing this is.

Again. Illustrations are difficult. Because. The cross is so unique. And so wonderful. That everything else. Seems trivial. Besides it. People do.

Occasionally. Make sacrifices. For one another. But never. Quite like Christ. I was reading recently. About Bonnie Prince Charlie.

Fleeing from the Redcoats. After the Battle of Culloden. When he came to Skelpe. A local clansman. Was commanded. To hand him over.

And he refused. He said. He was prepared. To die. For his prince. Prince. Well. That was very noble of him. But I wonder.

[25 : 17] If his prince. Would have been prepared. To die for him. Probably not. And yet. That is what Christ. Did for us. Our prince.

The king of glory. Dying for you. And I. Some of you. I am sure. Would die for your. Husband. Or your wife. Or your children. But would you die for a criminal. Christ did. Christ died for the ungodly.

There on the cross. He was actually dying. Amongst others. For that penitent thief. And for millions of others. Just as bad as that thief.

If a thousand. Disciples. Had formed a human shield. Around the garden of Gethsemane. To protect their master. From being arrested. Willing to be cut down.

[26 : 20] By the sword. If need be. For the sake of Jesus. That would have been. No more than he deserved. But they didn't of course.

They forsook him and fled. And yet Christ died. For those same disciples. He laid down his life. For these men.

Who were not prepared. At that time. To lay down their lives. For him. For these men. Who ran away. Perhaps some of us.

Have run away. From situations. At times. Perhaps to our shame. We've failed Christ. In all kinds of ways. And yet. Christ died for us.

That is love. Of the most extraordinary kind. For Christ to die for us. With all our sins.

[27 : 18] Suffering in agony. For you and I. That is amazing love. An amazing sacrifice. Finally. Finally.

The result of all this. An amazing success. This thought appears. Right at the beginning. Chapter 52. As many were astonished at you.

Verse 14. So. Verse 15. He shall sprinkle. Many nations. In other words. Multitudes worldwide. Both Jews. And Gentiles. Will be cleansed. By Christ. The sprinkling there. Being a reference. To the sprinkling of the blood.

In the sacrifices. Even kings. He says. Will shut their mouths. Yes. Even kings. Will be saved. That theme is taken up again.

[28 : 16] Later in chapter 53. Where we see. That Christ's sacrifice. Is effective. He didn't just. Try to save us. He didn't just. Offer salvation.

He actually. Saved us. Our griefs. Are lifted. Our sorrows. Are taken away. Our transgressions. Are forgiven.

Our iniquities. Are cleansed. Peace. Is actually. Made. Between us. And God. Our wounds. Are actually. Healed. The lost sheep.

Are not merely. Forgiven. They are actually. Brought back. Into the fold. Peter says. Quoting verse 6. You were straying. Like lost sheep.

But have now. Returned. To the shepherd. And overseer. Of your souls. I sometimes.

[29 : 12] Like to. Watch the BBC's. Gaelic language. Program. BBC. Alba. I don't speak. A word of Gaelic. But it's all. Helpfully. Provided. With subtitles.

But I watched. Recently. Some sheepdog. Trials. And I was. Transfixed. By it. I never. Realised. How difficult. It is. To get. Sheep. Through a gate.

Well. Christ. Successfully. Gets. All of his. Sheep. Through the gate. Of salvation. Mind. It cost him. More than just a few whistles. And an obedient dog. It cost him his life. But he has done it. He has rescued.

His lost sheep. For Christ himself. Personally. The cross leads to glory. Says at the beginning. He shall be high. And lifted up.

[30 : 09] He shall be exalted. Exalted. And that exaltation. Actually begins. In verse 9. With his burial. Though he died. Among the wicked. Yet he was buried. Among the rich.

In the tomb. Of Joseph. Of Arimathea. But of course. He didn't remain there. Gloriously. He rose from the dead. And is exalted. Now to the right hand. Of God.

The father. But his greatest joy. And his greatest triumph. Is to see. Us saved. You see that in verses.

10 and 11. He shall see his offspring. It says. That is his spiritual children. Like a father. Looking proudly.

Upon his family. He shall prolong his days. It says. He will live forever. But the point is. He will live forever. Amongst his people. The will of the Lord.

[31 : 06] Shall prosper in his hand. That will bring. Our salvation. Out of the anguish of his soul. He shall see. And be satisfied.

And what will he see? Multitudes saved. By the cross. Through Christ. The righteous one. Many will be accounted righteous.

Many notice. Not a few. But many. He bore the sin of many. Many. And many. Will be saved. An amazing success.

So what's your reaction to all this? Maybe. That there's someone here. Or someone. Listening. On the recording of this sermon. Who are still lost sheep. Still wandering. You're in the right place.

[32 : 07] In church. Or listening to a sermon. But that alone. That alone won't save you. Only trusting in Christ. Will save you.

Do you not hear the good shepherd calling you? Do you not see those nail pierced hands. Stretched out towards you? He is still gathering the sheep.

Even today. The great work of salvation is finished. He could say on the cross. It is finished. The atoning sacrifice has been offered up.

Once and for all. But the great work of gathering the flock. That goes on. Perhaps today is the day for you to return.

To the shepherd of your soul. But most of you. I'm quite sure. Are saved. And you'll be coming to the front shortly.

[33 : 08] And taking communion. Let me ask you to do so. With a real sense of amazement. And wonder. With a real sense of gratitude.

For what Christ has done for you. You know it's so easy to take all these things for granted. If you've been a Christian for some while.

You've heard these things a thousand times before. Nothing that I've said this morning has been new to you. You know the theology. You probably know Isaiah 53.

Probably by heart. So easy for that just to become a routine thing for you. So easy for you to come to the communion table.

Just as a matter of duty. Perhaps even with your thoughts wandering elsewhere. Don't let it happen. Let these things be always fresh to you.

[34 : 11] Remember your own great need of salvation. The sins that you personally have committed.

Even in the past week. Even the little sins. The pride. The prickliness. The half truths.

The unkind remarks. They all need the cleansing blood of Christ. Remember his great love for you. Dying for you. Even for you. With all your sins. Going to the cross on your behalf. Remember these things.

And rejoice. And renew your commitment to the Lord. Who bought you. With his own blood. May God make this communion.

[35 : 15] Very special to us. And may we all become. Faithful servants. Of the servant of God. Amen.