

GOOD FRIDAY - The Suffering Servant

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[0 : 00] 800 years before the first Good Friday, God spoke through the prophet Isaiah.

800 years before the first Good Friday, we have the most beautiful and poetic description of what happened that day.

800 years before it happened, God outlined with supernatural prophetic accuracy a description of the man of Good Friday, the Easter man called the servant of the Lord.

Isaiah 53 is a forward-looking prediction of the great salvation that the servant of the Lord brings to the world.

And we're going to look at it and reflect on it from three different angles. And they will be the servant's humility, the servant's crushing, his crushing, and the servant's victory.

[1 : 03] So humility, crushing and victory. Firstly, let's meditate on his humility starting at chapter 53 verse 1.

Who has believed what we have heard? To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Here he is. For he grew up before him like a young plant, like a root out of dry ground.

He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. The servant of the Lord entered our world, born of Mary, an ordinary man as far as appearances go.

There is nothing to those around him, nothing inherently majestic or glorious about him. Yet the implication seems to be though that we ought to worship him.

We ought to see him as majestic. But he is by all appearances ordinary, humble, a humble man. And though there is nothing in his humility necessarily early in his life that he ought to be worshipped, he ought not to be despised, yet that's how he's treated.

[2 : 15] Verse 3, The path the servant trod was the path of loving God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind.

And because he came into a world that finds the things of God repulsive, we live in a world that resists and rebels against the authority of God.

Even when we're pretending to be liking God, you can be rebelling against him. This man, this servant, he was too much. And he was despised and rejected and treated like a leopard.

People hid their faces from him. He was rejected. It goes on. I'll move on to verse, just forward a bit to verse 7. He was oppressed. He was afflicted.

Now see now his meekness. He did not open his mouth. Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, like a sheep that before its shearers is silent. So he did not open his mouth.

[3 : 27] Nobody has ever suffered an injustice like this man. No one's ever suffered oppression like this man, yet he did not fight it.

He was so humble, so meek. He did not open his mouth. He did not attempt to retaliate verbally. He did not entertain giving an eye for an eye.

He did not murmur. He did not grumble. Silently he entrusted himself to God his Father. Silently. This servant is so great and yet so humble.

He's humble enough, I believe, to break our pride. Humble enough to break our arrogance. The arrogance of people like you and people like me.

And the humility of the servant is so great. It doesn't have a limit. It just goes and goes and goes all the way to death, all the way to the end of his life, to what Isaiah calls his crushing.

[4 : 31] So let's now look at his crushing. And I'm looking now at verse 8 and 9. By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future?

Who could have imagined that his life would end like this? This great servant of the Lord would end with such humiliation and shame? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the

transgression of my people.

They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich. Although he had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth. Who could have imagined that the, you know, it's one thing for the servant of the Lord to be insulted, to be rejected.

That's bad enough. But for him to actually be cut off, to be killed in a disgraceful way, in a crucifixion, that is what the servant of the Lord allowed himself to undergo.

He had done no violence. He had no deceit in his mouth. Who here could claim to have only spoken pure words their whole life?

[5 : 40] Who here could claim to speak only the truth all the time, without deceit, without distortion? Yet the servant of the Lord could. It was a great perversion of justice.

The mob and the Roman authorities, Pontius Pilate, all complicit in this massive travesty of justice. And yet the prophecy makes clear that it was not beyond the power of God what happened. It was not outside even the purposes of God. In fact, it was the will of God. Verse 10, it was the will of the Lord to crush him with pain.

There's no ambiguity there. It was God's will that this would happen. The whole Good Friday event, the meek life, the rejection, the ridicule, the brutal death, the crushing with pain, was all the will and plan of God.

It was the plan of God expressed here 800 years before the historical event came to pass. Now, why is that? Because in this event, in the crushing is a victory.

[6 : 56] A victory for God, a victory for the servant of God and for those who make it their own, it's a victory for you and I also.

It's a victory for us. So, we've seen the servant's humility and meekness. We've seen something of his crushing but now the most important thing is to see what does it mean?

What is the victory of this? What is the purpose of God in this? And I'll move back now to verse 4. It's repeated so much. It's so clear and yet so many miss it.

Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases. Yet we are counted him stricken, struck down by God and afflicted. The victory of the servant is that he is taking what we deserve. He is carrying what we ought to have carried. The only man to fully and completely love God and worship and honour God was struck down by God because he was stepping into our shoes.

[7 : 58] He was stepping into our place. Verse 5, He was wounded for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Yours and mine are our sins.

He was taking the punishment for. Here is the victory. Here is the victory. Upon him was the punishment that made us whole.

That is what he achieved. By his bruises we are healed. This is the victory of the plan of God achieved 2,000 years ago. The victory of the meek servant of God and it's our victory too if we will appropriate the blessings of his death and allow our punishment to be taken by him and allow our sins to be covered by him.

Can we say, verse 6, all we like sheep have gone astray. We have all turned to our own way but the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Can you say that? Is that where your hope is in the death of the servant? See, ultimately what God has to give the world to help the world is not self-help.

[9 : 14] It's not advice or knowledge how we can help ourselves. That's not what God gives the world. What God gives the world is rescue. What God gives the world is complete rescue through the death of the servant.

The hope of the world from God is not education, is not a hope of kind of continual improvement, civilisation getting better and better.

That's not the hope that God gives. The hope that God gives is redemption through the punishment of the servant. That's the hope of the world. That's our hope and it's the only hope of the world.

It's the only offering for sin that has been made that is sufficient. I'll read to you from verse 10. We read part of it before. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him with pain.

When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring and shall prolong his days.

Through him the will of the Lord shall prosper. Through this death is the victory of God, is the prospering of the plan of God and it's also the victory of the servant.

[10 : 23] The servant, out of his anguish, he shall see light. He shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous and there's our victory.

Through him, we are made righteous. We are made righteous. This is the knowledge that can change the world, knowledge of the suffering servant of God, God.
The righteousness to which we must all aspire is not our own righteousness, our own achievement. No, the righteousness to which we aspire is that of the servant.
That he can make us righteous. He can declare us righteous. That is where our righteousness comes from, outside of ourselves because of the death of the servant. And because of his death, God makes him central in the economy of the universe.
Verse 12, Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great. He shall divide the spoil with the strong. His is the victory, you see. Because he poured himself to death, he was numbered with the transgressors.

[11 : 36] Yet he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors. The servant of the Lord is great. He is central. He is the centre of everything because of his death.

God the Father has exalted him because of his death. He was numbered with the transgressors and now he is the only one in the universe who can pardon transgressors.
He is the only one who can do it because of his death. He is the only one that you can go to to have your sins taken away. Well friends, we have looked at his humility, his crushing and the meaning of that in his victory.

Now if the words of the prophet Isaiah can so perfectly predict something 800 years later, if God's words can come true like that, then 2,800 years later God's words can address us today and God's word in this prophecy does address us and it questions us.

And so I go back to the questions of chapter 53 verse 1. Here is God questioning you today. Who has believed what we have heard?

[12 : 52] Who has appropriated this? Who has trusted this death? Who has made it their own? God says, have you believed it? Have you believed it?

Do you believe that the servant was crushed for your iniquities? Do you believe that the punishment that brought, that brings you peace with God is upon the servant?

Do you believe that he was bruised for your transgressions? Because you can know it and not believe it. You can know it and not own it. You can know it and not appropriate it.

And the question is who has believed it? Who has taken it? Second question of chapter 53 God asks us to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

The arm of the Lord means the power of God to save. To whom has the salvation of God been made known? It's really the same question. Who has really taken on the death of the servant?

[13 : 50] Who has made the death of the servant to pardon the pun the crux of their life? Who has done that? Who has had God's saving power made known to them?

Can you say that? That you know the saving power of God in the death of the servant? Do you believe with all your heart and soul that you are a sheep who has gone astray and the only thing that can and has saved you is that your iniquity has been placed on him?

Is that your only hope? Is that your only hope? To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? And I think the final question raised by the sort of introduction to the whole section is that do you know where he is now?

Do you know where this servant is now? And I think this is hinted at at the start of the reading at 52 verse 13 kind of anticipating the end point and I'll finish with this.

See, my servant shall prosper. He shall be exalted and lifted up. He shall be very high after he has achieved this through his death. Just as there were many who were astonished at him so marred was his appearance beyond human semblance and his form beyond that of mortals.

[15 : 06] So it was just it was a gruesome and awful and terrible death. So shall this is our future hope now so shall he startle many nations.

Kings shall shut their mouths because of him for that which he had not which had not been told them they shall see and that which had not been heard they shall contemplate.

You see this is part of the prophecy that hasn't been fulfilled yet. Jesus has been lifted up exalted resurrected enthroned crowned with glory and honour he is now forever gloriously marred the lamb that was slain who reigns on the throne he will come back to be judge of all and he will startle the nations and kings mouths will be silenced on the day of judgment.

And it's funny because you think why were people surprised the first Good Friday? Why was it so surprising that Jesus should die for sin when here it is they've had the text for 800 years?

But that challenge could be put on you as well. Will you be surprised on the day of judgment? Will you be surprised when you meet Jesus face to face the lamb that was slain and he's the judge of the universe?

[16 : 25] He will startle many people many will be surprised and I think in our hearts every person we meet and we know it Jesus is the judge that we will face.

The disciples were shocked but we ought not to be shocked as we come to meet Jesus. We ought not to be startled as we come to see him lifted up on the day of judgment.

Are you ready to meet the lamb that was slain? Are you ready to meet him? My challenge to you is to put your life in the hands of the servant of the Lord.

Put your whole life in the hands of the man of suffering in the one called the righteous one. Put your life into his hands today every day and forevermore.

Amen.