

The Suffering Servant

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Preacher: Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 0 0] 53, Isaiah chapter 53, and we read at verse 7. 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. Now, it's quite extraordinary that this prophecy of Isaiah, which was written probably around about 700 years or so before the time of Jesus, is so powerful, it is so accurate, that you would almost believe that Isaiah had been an eyewitness to everything that had taken place.

because some of the descriptions of what Christ endured, some of the descriptions given to us of the things that Christ experienced are so accurate, they're so powerful, you would be convinced that Isaiah had been there, that he had been an onlooker.

But his description not only of what Christ experienced and what Christ endured at an outward level, but also the attitude of people.

[1 : 5 2] You would again think that Isaiah had been an eyewitness, where people have been so dismissive of Jesus, where they're despising him, and they're hating him, and they're rejecting him, which was so true of his life here on earth.

And yet, we know that this, of course, is all what had been revealed to the prophet Isaiah. So the details here are incredibly accurate.

And when you read this, one of the features of Isaiah's writings is the beauty of the language. Some scholars will say that the language in Isaiah is as beautiful as you will find writing in the Hebrew language in the Hebrew language in the Hebrew language.

But that doesn't disguise also the bleakness and the harshness of it as well. Although the language is beautiful, there's a bleakness and there's a harshness about it all.

Because it is entering in to so much of what we know was the experience of our Lord Jesus Christ, where he went in the place and in the room of sinners like you and me.

[3 : 0 4] And again, one of the things that so often with regard to, even with regard to, I suppose, with regard to Christian song and such like, very often there is the idea maybe of Calvary and the Green Hill far away, that there was a lot of it was ugly and brutal.

Golgotha was the place of the skull. It was a place of where man's inhumanity was being revealed at its very worst. And that's one of the great things about the Christian faith and about the Bible, is its incredible honesty.

And it's dealing with issues and realities just exactly where they are. And that's one of the things about the Christian faith, that the Lord Jesus Christ enables us to deal with situations where we're at.

That it's not a matter of escapism, but facing up to these things. And so, as we come today to reflect on some of what we have here before us, just very briefly, we've got to remember that today is a day where we come to consider, that's one of the things that it says in verse 8, that as for his generation, who considered?

Here was the greatest thing that ever happened in this world, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for sin, and who considered it? Most of his generation didn't.

[4 : 35] But let us thank the Lord that it is something that the Lord has set out for his people, right throughout the generations, that they will consider what he has done.

And not just to consider it, but to remember it in a very real way. And that's what we're doing today. We're doing it because the Lord Jesus has required this of us, that we come together.

And he has given us this table, not out of a table of superstition, or a table of just some formal thing that we do. This is real.

It is a means of grace. He has given us this to strengthen our faith, to make us stronger Christians, to give us a greater appetite for himself, a greater understanding of what he has done for us, individually, personally.

All these things come into it. So, as we consider just briefly some of what we have here, we must always have this idea of us gathering together by his appointment to remember what he has done for us, for you, for me.

[5 : 45] And so we see here that it tells us in verse 7, he was oppressed and he was afflicted. Now, this word, oppressed, means a harsh treatment of somebody.

Who really has no rights. It's like all the rights have been taken away. I suppose you would call, like, for instance, a slave. A slave had no rights.

And the slave was absolutely dependent upon what either master or mistress would do with them. Some slaves were fortunate to end up in a home where people were reasonable, but many slaves didn't.

And they had a horrendous time. And they were violated and abused and beaten and they suffered. Some were killed. But they had no rights.

And this is how it is. It's quite an extraordinary thing to think that the Lord of this universe, the second person of the Godhead, has come to this place where he has virtually no rights.

[6 : 49] Of course, he has no rights because he has given himself. He has every right. But it's as if he has been stripped of every right that he has.

And so he is there as somebody who would appear to have no rights or whatever. And this word affliction has the idea of somebody, yes, being afflicted, but being belittled at the same time of being, like, mocked and brought down and made fun of and belittled into just into a nobody.

So when you combine these two things together, it is such an accurate presentation of what the Lord Jesus Christ experienced. Because when we go to the gospel accounts, we see these are the very things that happened to him.

Where he was abused and violated, where he was mocked, where he was ridiculed, where he was belittled. And just it's like everything has been thrown down upon him.

And so Jesus then was finally, as we know, that he was led to his death. Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter. Now, if a person was to be oppressed and afflicted, and there was always a hope that at the end there might be a way out.

[8 : 16] I'm sure every slave dreamed of the day they might be set free, of that somebody would deliver them. I'm sure there was always some little bit of flicker of hope somewhere.

Maybe I'll get out of this. But when this oppression and this affliction is a precursor to death, then we see this is an awful thing. And that's exactly how it was with Jesus.

All of this that took place, first of all, was leading up to his death. And we know that as he was led out to his death, because of everything that he endured, because of the flogging and the beating and the abuse and everything that he went through, he was so weak that he himself couldn't carry the cross.

They had to make Simon Sereney to carry the cross for him. And, you know, there's a lot of people who have the idea that somehow that for Jesus it was easier than it would be for other people.

Because some people have the idea that, yes, Jesus Christ, but he's the Son of God. It would be easier for him to endure all this.

[9 : 33] Yes, he's man, but he's God. And people have the idea that he was almost had super strength and super endurance and super ability to sort of not to feel the pain or just to, that somehow he was almost oblivious to that he was above it.

Not at all. The reversion fact is true. Because Jesus was sinless. Then every aspect of sin hurt him in a way that it will never hurt you or me.

You see, there is within ourselves, it's a very wide, broad idea, but within ourselves, this is part of our problem, is that there is a part of us that sides with sin, that sympathizes with sin, because we're sinners.

That was never so with Jesus. Jesus saw sin for all its ugliness. For all its horror. He saw it in all that it was, and he saw the end result of it.

For instance, we find at the time when Lazarus died, we find how Jesus is groaning in spirit. And it's like there's an anger within him at what death is.

[10 : 55] It's incredibly descriptive of just the turmoil that he is in, as he is seeing death, and the impact of sin, and the effect of sin.

And he's seeing it in a way that you and I cannot, so that the whole being of Jesus is reacting against it. So Jesus is somebody, because of his sinlessness, is so hypersensitive to sin in every shape and form.

So that didn't lessen things, it made it more difficult. And he was as much, although he was void of sin, he was as much a human as you and I.

Every aspect of his being, so that physically, in the same way as you and I, I know people have different pain thresholds, and we've no idea of what his particular pain threshold was, but he was as human as you and I.

So that he felt pain in the same way as you and I. He felt hunger in the same way as you and I. He felt thirst in the same way as you and I. He experienced emotional distress in the same way as you and I.

[12 : 12] Because we read of Jesus being exceedingly sorrowful. We read of Jesus weeping. Not just that a tear came down his cheek, but it was really, really weeping.

So Jesus is somebody who is, yes, he's the Son of God, but he is so human. And we must not ever lose sight of that fact. So that's why we're saying here that it wasn't easier for Jesus.

In fact, it was harder for Jesus to do what he did as the Son of God. And so we find this, that he, in fact, it tells us of how he poured out his soul and to death.

That's one of the descriptions that's given to us of what he did. He couldn't do more. He poured out every single aspect of his being in everything.

That's what he did. So we mustn't lose sight of that fact. And we find then that Jesus, he was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth.

[13 : 22] And it tells us that he was like a sheep before his shearer's silent. And as we know, one of the things that a sheep before the shearer, where the sheep is there, to be shorn.

And Jesus went through everything. And you know, in one sense, he was shorn of everything. Jesus had everything taken from him. He had his friends were taken from him.

Every support and comfort that he knew was taken from him. We find even on the cross that light at midday, which here's just, it's about after midday.

It would be a strange thing if our day was plunged into darkness, but that's what happened at the cross. Everything, everything that was right and normal was taken away.

But two particular things were happening at this time. One was, in his experience, the worst thing that was being taken away from was the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

[14 : 29] Remember, one of the names given to the Holy Spirit is a comforter. And we know that the Holy Spirit's ministry, this is one of the wonderful things that he does, is that he brings comfort and through that comfort brings strength.

Because these two things are tied together. And you'll often find people after times of bereavement and such like, and they're saying, I'm amazed at myself.

But it's not at yourself. It's a Lord. It's a Lord who gave you. It's a Lord's ministry. It's a Lord's ministering that comfort, that strength to you in that particular situation.

Well, for Jesus, who, remember, in our nature, he had been given the Holy, remember, the Holy Spirit came down upon him. He was given the Holy Spirit without measure.

He had the fullness of the Spirit. But we believe that the Spirit's comfort, the ministry of the Spirit, was being taken away from him. Comforters found I none.

[15 : 34] Not at a human level. Not even at a divine level. That's why Jesus cries out, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Forsaken, abandoned. Every source of comfort that he had ever known is taken away from him.

All alone. And sometimes we find it hard to understand just what that is because we, even ourselves, we cannot enter into these type of experiences.

So all the protection that Jesus had enjoyed, and we've got to remember that he was enjoying divine protection because there was many a time his enemies tried to get him. But you often find that verse at the end.

But his time had not yet come. See, they couldn't lay hands on him until his time had come. But now the time has come. And it's as if the Lord has opened up the hedge that's around him.

[16 : 43] And that's why Jesus said, This is your hour and the power of darkness. Jesus knew this was the time when the gates of hell were opened. And Satan was given free access.

It's one of the wonderful things that the Lord's people have is divine protection. We read about it in the book of Job. You remember how Satan was complaining before God that no wonder Job worships you and loves you because you built a hedge around him and all that he has.

He's so safe and he's so secure. And Satan is saying, Take down that hedge. Let me at him and you'll see a different job. You'll see that he's only he's only worshipping you because of what he has.

And of course, Satan was completely wrong. But God for for his own purposes and ultimately for Job's good gave Satan permission except he couldn't take Job's life.

And we read of the utter havoc and the fearful distress and the just the awful experiences Job went through. But that was because the hedge was broken.

[18 : 03] The hedge was opened up. It's one of the wonderful things that we have that the Lord is a protecting hedge around his people. Well, that protection was taken away from Jesus.

He had experienced temptation in the wilderness and it tells us that Satan left him for a time. But whatever he experienced in the wilderness was nothing like what he would have experienced then at the time of the cross.

And it doesn't go into the temptation of Jesus on the cross but let us be absolutely persuaded because it was the time of the power of darkness that every force would have been unleashed against him and every form of temptation would also have been unleashed against him.

We cannot even begin to comprehend all that Jesus experienced on the cross. And so it tells us he was oppressed and he was afflicted yet he opened not his mouth like a lamb that is led to the slaughter.

And again it's very fitting that we have the image here of the lamb because as we know there's probably no more innocent. We talk of the innocence of our lamb and we often use that as somebody who's as quiet as a lamb or as gentle as a lamb because that's one of the things about the lamb.

[19 : 31] And you remember that when Israel at the time of the Passover that they were to take a lamb they had to take the best lamb. They couldn't go amongst the flock and say right where's the one with the broken leg or where's the one that doesn't look like it's going to survive.

They weren't allowed to do that. They had to go and get the very best that they had without any spot or blemish on it. And this was a lamb. It had to be a perfect lamb.

Of course this was all pointing to the Lord Jesus speaking of his innocence and speaking of his meekness because through it all he never opened his mouth.

That's one of the extraordinary things right throughout. The whole arrest trial and crucifixion of Jesus is the most unjust mock trial that this world has ever known.

But at no point does Jesus try and defend himself or try and justify himself all the time. It just says he opened not his mouth.

[20 : 43] The only time he opened his mouth was when he stood before Pilate and Pilate said Pilate couldn't get over how he wouldn't answer. Pilate said to him do you not realize? He said I have all the power.

I have power to crucify you. I have power to release you. Jesus said you could have no power at all except it were given you from above. So these were that was an extraordinary word that actually shook Pilate.

but what Jesus was saying was absolutely true because every step of the way Jesus submitted to what was before him.

And that's what we find in the garden remember when Jesus was arrested the soldiers came to take him and he said whom do you seek? And they said Jesus of Nazareth and he said I am he.

Remember what happened? They all fell to the ground. it was like they were propelled backwards. I find that one of the most amazing moments because they must have all looked at themselves and thought what am I doing down here?

[21 : 53] How did that happen? But there in that one moment Jesus is displaying his power. And Jesus is really saying you could never ever ever take me unless I gave myself.

And that's what he did because then again he asks them they get up and regroup. He says who do you seek? They said Jesus of Nazareth. He said I am he. And this time he allowed himself to be taken.

So Jesus is displaying there his authority, his control over everything but that he could if he needed. Remember when Peter pulled out the sword and remember how Peter had said to Jesus you know if there's one person you can depend on Lord it's me because I'm ready to go to prison with you I'm ready to die with you.

And he meant it. And when the group of soldiers came and Peter of course being Peter he says right here's the moment I'm ready Jesus I'm ready to defend you.

Remember he struck the servant or the high priest cut off his ear. Peter. But everything changed for Peter because Jesus said put away your sword. He said I could call on twelve legions of angels.

[23 : 13] Think of the Jesus had done that and if the command had been given he could annihilate the world in a moment. All humanity on it. But Jesus is showing and displaying his submission and showing that he is willingly giving himself up.

And not only is he the lamb and he's the sheep but he's also the shepherd. It's one of the great descriptions Jesus often gives of himself. I am the good shepherd. But Jesus' shepherding is different to the shepherding of others.

Because if you were to imagine for a moment here's a shepherd in the Middle East and he has a flock of sheep. And a pack of wolves comes and the shepherd says I must defend these sheep.

This is going to be difficult. I don't know how I'm going to do it but I'm going to defend them. I'm going to defend these sheep against these wolves. And so the shepherd tries his best but he ends up being killed.

The wolves kill the shepherd. What happens then? The sheep are utterly defenseless. As long as the shepherd is there, there is hope for the sheep.

[24 : 29] But the moment the shepherd is killed, the sheep have had it. Well it's a very reverse with Jesus. Because as a good shepherd he laid down his life in order to save the sheep.

This is the way that the sheep are saved. This is the way that you and I are saved. It's by the shepherd giving his life for us. And that's a wonderful thing that Jesus has done for us.

So all the time we find that Jesus, that he opened not his mouth. He remained silent. He opened not his mouth. Remember that time he was before everybody, before the chief priests, before the elders, before Pilate, before Herod.

Herod was really annoyed. because remember for a long time Herod had wanted to meet with Jesus. And at last he gets his opportunity.

Jesus says not a word. You know, Herod had killed the voice or the messenger from Jesus.

[25 : 39] John the Baptist was a messenger who had come to prepare the way of Jesus. And there was a period in Herod's life when he actually, it tells us that he listened to John gladly when John was in prison.

Amazing words. He listened to John gladly. But there came a day when Herod silenced that voice. And it tells us for a long time he had wanted to meet with Jesus and here is Jesus.

But Jesus has not one single word for Herod. I think it's a very solemn thought there for us to realize that there is an appointed time, there is a time of opportunity.

And if we keep silencing the voices that speak to us, the voices of God speaking to us, there might come a time where there is nothing else left. So it's so important that we always take what the opportunities that we have.

And so the Lord Jesus said he suffered. In fact, Peter tells us about this experience in 1 Peter 2, Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

[26 : 53] When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten. As it says in the Bible, no man ever spoke like this man.

But we could also say no man ever remained silent under such provocation as this man, Jesus. And then it says, time's going just very briefly, verse 8, 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? As we said earlier on, of his generation, who considered?

He came to his own, and his own received him not. The most important thing for any person, and could I say to people who might not be at the table, maybe some of the people who aren't at the table today should be at the table.

That is something between yourself and the Lord that has to be worked out. But the thing is, whatever you do or you don't do in this life, consider Jesus.

[27 : 59] Because he is the one person that we all have to face one day. And surely the best thing that we can do is to face him.

By submitting before him, bowing before him, asking him to become our Lord and our Savior. Because we all have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, every one of us, and give an account of all that we have done in the body, whether good or evil.

And so it's a very solemn thing. So let us consider this Jesus. So his generation, his peers, they didn't consider him. But it tells us here that he was cut off out of the land of the living.

Cut off out of the land of the living. I find that quite an extraordinary statement. Here is this world that we are on planet earth, and all of life that exists on this wonderful planet, and all humanity that lives in this wonderful planet.

world that all was made by the second person of the Godhead. Father, Son, Holy Spirit were all involved.

[29 : 10] By him, there was nothing made that was made. Nothing that was made was made but by him. Isn't that extraordinary that the second person of the Godhead made the land of the living, has come to walk on the land of the living, and now the very ones that he has made have decided to cut him off out of the land of the living.

It really, it's where we see sin in all its twistedness and ugliness and perversion. But then we're told the reason he was stricken for the transgression of my people.

You see, we are the ones who should have been cut off out of the land of the living. We are the ones who should have suffered. But this is the amazing thing that the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us.

He was oppressed, he was crushed, he was afflicted, he was broken, he endured everything. Not only what we were considering what was taken from him, but also what was put on him.

God's wrath and God's punishment for sin. He endured all that for us. He endured, that's what it tells us, stricken for the transgression of my people.

[30 : 39] Sin in all its twistedness and all its wickedness, in all its perversion, in all its ugliness. You know, it's one of the things we so often don't understand, of what sin really is.

Maybe there have been times in your life where you've had a wee glimpse of something of sin. And it's an awful discovery when you see sin for what it is.

Not a particular sin, because every so often you might do something and you might say to yourself, oh man, I should not have done that.

That's not what we're talking about. It's this sight that the Holy Spirit gives to us, where it's like everything is pulled back, and we're given an insight into the sheer awfulness of what sin is, of its corruption, of its death, its putrid, it's the most awful thing.

And I think there are times that in our Christian experience we need to be given a little glimpse of just what sin is. And it's through that, not in order to cripple us, but enable us to understand more and more of what Jesus bore for us.

[32 : 07] Because, you know, we can go through in our Christian life, yes, we're Christians and accepting, oh, the Lord saved me. But sometimes we don't grasp the enormity of what we have been saved from.

And the enormity of what we have been saved to. Because we can just, as it were, and it doesn't matter how far down we go or far up we go, we'll never fully grasp it in this world.

But it's important for us that we grasp more of it than so often we do. And that's what Jesus has done for us. That he has been stricken for the transgression of my people.

Just in the same way as the lamb, the Passover time. That's the way it was. It was slaughtered and its blood was put in the doorposts and the lintel.

And people either, if you go on back to Egypt, everybody had a choice of what they did. Everybody had a choice either to accept this word or reject it. If they rejected, the firstborn in the house would die.

[33 : 15] But it might have been possible that one or two people would say, that doesn't make sense. You mean I have to kill this lamb and put the blood on the doorposts and the lintel and that protects me?

Yes, that's exactly what God is saying. And that's what God has done with us with Jesus Christ. This is the only provision for us. And we either accept or we reject.

And if we accept God's provision in Jesus, then God will never, ever, ever punish us twice. He is just, he is holy, he is righteous, he cannot go against all that he is.

He punishes once and he punishes his son. But if we refuse his son, then there is nothing else. There is nothing else for us.

And then just in a word, 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. Jesus, as we know, that he was crucified between the criminals.

[34 : 28] In fact, they used to say that the person in the center, if there were three being crucified, that he was awash to the criminals. that's where Jesus took his place, the worst.

He made his death. That's what it says, made with the wicked. But then it says, a rich man in his death. Those who were crucified had no real right of burial.

They certainly didn't get a proper grave in the sense that normal people are buried in a grave, in a proper grave. But the father was seen to it.

that his dear son was going to be given not only a decent burial, but he was going to have a rich grave. Although it was part of Christ's humiliation to enter into the grave and to be under the power of death, his actual sufferings ceased when he said, it is finished, and he yielded up his spirit.

But his humiliation continued under the power of death. death, although his body didn't see any corruption, but the father saw it fitting that his son should have the grave of a rich man.

[35 : 44] And we know how Joseph of Arimathea came forward and begged the body of Jesus and put the body in the tomb. And so we see that even in this, we see the fulfillment of prophecy.

prophecy. And it's no wonder that the Lord wants us to remember all that he did. His great love, his great love that wants the best for you, his great love that will never let you go, it's his great love that looked you out.

You didn't look him out, you thought you did, but it was him who looked you out. That's part of what he says, he came, I have come to seek and to save that which is lost.

You remember that beautiful description where Jesus is a good shepherd, he leaves the ninety and nine in the wilderness and he'll go after the one that is lost. And he'll bring them all in until the fold is full.

The fold isn't full yet. We're today remembering that great love. Those of you who are at the table, it's a wonderful privilege to be able to remember his love in this way.

[36 : 55] Those who are not at the table, I pray that you will discover his love and that you will come to know it in a very, very powerful way. Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we give thanks for your great love, for your great work, for the great sacrifice that you have made for sin.

O Lord, we are poor and needy, and yet it's in that condition we give thanks that you think upon us. And we pray that you will bless us and that we will continue to know your blessing and that you will draw close to us, even closer, as we come to your table.

Watch over us, we pray, and forgive us our sin in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We're going to sing from Psalm 16.