

Isaiah 53:10-12 - The Downs and Ups of Following Jesus

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 March 2016

Preacher: Will Spink

- [0 : 0 0] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.
- Love that. That's the good news of Easter, isn't it? That Jesus has blown the door open so that we can enter and be with Him forever, that He's made the way for us.
- What a great joy that is. Thank you all for that song. I don't know if you've noticed lately, but we live in a crazy, upside-down kind of world, don't we?
- Maybe you have noticed. Maybe you've observed that around you lately. For example, the internet has made it so that we connect with more people than ever before.
- We do things faster, and we work faster, and we work longer, many of us, than ever before, and yet we seem to be less connected in some ways than ever before.
- [1 : 0 3] A lot of people would be hard-pressed to argue that we actually are doing better and getting more accomplished and have figured things out more, even with all these advances. We call it a rat race, that we're always working longer and harder and not getting any further than we did spinning our wheels.
- We don't seem to play well with others, even though we're connected to a lot of people. Some days, like even this week, if you watch the news, you might be tempted to think that death has gotten the upper hand.
- That those who are intent on terrorizing others are on the rise, while those who want to be peaceful are suffering. I won't comment even on our current political scene and what it seems to get you to the top in that arena these days and how that works.
- And we could go on and on with examples of things that are upside-down, seemingly. A team like Alabama even beats a great team like Clemson in a football game.
- It's a crazy world. It's upside-down. Things are not the way that they should be. It's a crazy world that seems sometimes upside-down or, at the very least, out of control.
- [2 : 2 2] We all feel this in different ways, don't we, in our lives, places that we feel confused or out of control. And I want us to ask this morning, what does Easter have to say about that?
- What would Jesus say about a world like this? What does it look like to follow Jesus in this kind of crazy context? Whether you're a follower of Jesus yourself or just wondering about who Jesus is and what it means to follow Him, or maybe you're not even wondering but you got dressed up and dragged here against your will this morning.
- Hey, we're really glad that you're here too, by the way. Regardless of where you are, Jesus claims to have answers to that question that are life-changing for all of us, that change the way we would look at every aspect of our lives.
- God's people in the Old Testament know what it feels like to live in a crazy upside-down world. In the part of Isaiah's prophecy that we're reading this morning, he's writing to people in exile, under the rule of a Babylonian king who doesn't share any of their priorities or values.

God's people are oppressed. Many have died. They've lost their homes, disconnected from families. They wonder where hope for new life will ever come from.

[3 : 51] And Isaiah's coming with a message of comfort, of consolation, of hope for God's people. But it won't sound exactly like what they might have expected.

Let's look at Isaiah chapter 53 and see what he tells them about the one who will come to bring and be their hope. He's to be their king, but he's called a servant, the suffering servant.

Already in this chapter, before where we'll pick up reading, he's been prophesied to die and then to be buried. And we'll pick up at verse 10 of Isaiah 53.

This is God's inerrant and infallible word. In a world of fleeting things, something that is eternally permanent. In a world of things that fail you, something absolutely reliable that you can count on.

Isaiah 53 at verse 10. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him. He has put him to grief. When his soul makes an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring.

[5 : 01] 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. The grass withers, the flowers fade. But these words of our God will stand forever.

Pray with me and we'll talk about them together. Father, we are so grateful for your word. Without it, we would be lost and confused.

Not knowing what we could trust. Where we could find truth. And yet you have shown us truth. In your son and in your word.

[6 : 07] And we are grateful for it. Might we see him more clearly as we talk about him together this morning. Holy Spirit, show us Jesus. So that he will be glorious to us.

And that we will be changed for having seen him again this morning. We ask in his name. Amen. As God brings us hope for living in this upside down world.

The first thing we see this morning is that there is always need for death before new life. There is always need for death before new life.

It may seem obvious, but on Easter it is important to remember that the way to the empty tomb was through a cross. Wasn't it? It is interesting in this beautiful prophecy in Isaiah 53.

How clearly this is laid out for us. Just as the description develops through this whole chapter. It works chronologically through the life of Jesus. It starts as he begins to grow up.

[7 : 13] Verse 2. And then as he suffers and dies. Verse 5. And then in verse 9 he is buried. And so we get to the verses that we read earlier that start right after that.

And it is as you would expect about resurrection. About Jesus rising from the grave after he has been buried. But it is not just about that, is it?

Even when you get to the resurrection part, Isaiah can't keep from turning the clock back over and over again and talking about his death. He keeps connecting back to his death to talk about the resurrection.

Look at these verses just one more time. He starts out saying it was God's will to crush him. To put him to grief. That Jesus is going to make an offering for guilt.

In other words, he is going to die for the guilty. There is going to be anguish for his soul. And all the way down, even in the part where they have most talked about resurrection, now he has poured out his soul to death.

[8 : 19] You can't talk about the resurrection without talking about death, can you? Perhaps God's people might have thought the prophecies about their future king would begin with victory and power and death for others, right?

To all those who depressed them. And the message of hope comes, the promise of a savior. And we read that God himself will crush the one who's coming to rescue them.

The one who's their hope. The only death happening is his death. Not the death of all their oppressors in this passage, is it? And it must be that way, right?

Why must the savior come and die? The good news for us about Jesus starts with his death. Because someone must die because of our sin.

A holy God must punish sin and sin deserves death. Death. We've been looking here at Southwood during this Easter season at images of the cross from the Old Testament.

[9 : 27] Foreshadows, we've called them, of what the cross of Jesus means. What's happening when he dies in our place. And every one of them is talking about this.

Starting over here with the scapegoat of Leviticus 16. Who's sent away from the presence of God to die. So that God's people can come into his presence and live.

Then the blood of the Passover lamb. Who's slain and his blood on the doors in place of the blood of the firstborn of every home in Israel.

That they would live while the lamb dies. Then the serpent lifted up on the pole in Numbers 21. It shows us that Jesus is actually, as he's lifted up as the serpent, he says, will become sin.

He himself will actually become our sin in our place so that we can be healed. So that we can know life. Isaiah takes that picture.

[10 : 31] He makes it even clearer in this passage with the man of sorrows. Verse 3. Jesus is going to come and be acquainted with grief.

He's going to be familiar with suffering and pain. And then verse 5. He's going to be pierced for our transgressions. Crushed for our iniquities.

You see, he doesn't have grief and sorrows of his own that he's earned for himself. He has grief and sorrows that are ours. That we deserve. That he takes.

He takes our punishment. Our chastisement. And gives us peace. He's wounded and we are healed. Right? As we keep reading through the passage, we get to the verses we read this morning.

Verse 10. The will of the Lord to crush him. To put him to grief. The guilt offering. He's going to be the one who's the sacrifice.

[11 : 30] Who atones and pays for the guilt of all the guilty. So that his offspring, it says, can live. He bears our iniquities.

Verse 11. He's going to bear their iniquities. And then verse 12. He's going to bore. He bore the sin of many. He makes intercession for transgressors.

For those who have sinned. He dies in their place. He stands in for them. He had to die. So that we could live. I've read the story of two brothers in Missouri.

Who went out to play near a sandbag levee. Not too far from their home. They got caught while they were playing in quicksand. And began to struggle against it.

By the time rescue workers got there and reached them. They could see only the younger brother. Neck deep in the sand. Standing there.

[12 : 32] And one of them rushed over to him. And as he got to the younger brother. He said, where is your brother? And the young boy said, I'm standing on his shoulders.

I'm standing on his shoulders. The older brother apparently had figured out that for one of them to live. The other was going to have to die.

And so he gave his life that his younger brother might have a chance to live. Our elder brother, Jesus, has done the same for us.

He has given his life that we might live. So for those of us following Jesus, there's always need for death before new life.

What does that mean for following Jesus in this world? A couple of things for now. I think it means followers of Jesus should face suffering and pain honestly.

[13 : 32] You know, I'd really like to think that I could just have the new life. And skip straight to it. Without all the pain and suffering and sorrow and difficulty. I'd like to just have the wonderful, happy, cheery parts.

When I was a child, I thought that's what following Jesus meant. That you smiled all the time. So I always smiled. I was a smiley kid. And people at church would come up to me and say, That's the joy of the Lord.

He's smiling the joy of the Lord. And you know what I thought as a kid? Oh, that made me proud. It made me smile bigger. I had the joy of the Lord. That can happen.

But following Jesus is not about just putting on a happy face. It's really not at all. Following the man of sorrows is not at all about just putting on a happy face.

And pretending in the face of life's difficulty. Followers of Christ are able to be honest about the painful reality of suffering. We should be people of tears.

[14 : 39] Especially when we enter into the pain of others with them. Followers of Jesus should not find their hope in power first. In moving up and advancing.

In political control. In financial strength. In social influence. It's not where our hope primarily lies.

But rather we should be willing to be silent. To be persecuted. To lay down our lives for others. To deny self.

Take up our cross. And follow Him. Because we should know that the new life that we long for. Doesn't come by skipping over the pain. And the dying.

That must take place. Rather by walking through it in the footprints of our Savior. That's what He's done for us. Now some of you probably should be thinking.

[15 : 36] Seriously pastor. Come on. It's Easter. I mean we wore spring clothes. And I know the sun hasn't come out yet. And I know that's discouraging to you. But can't you talk about new life?

I thought this was going to be about hope. In this world that we live in. Hear me. It is about hope. It's just about real. Honest.

Never let you down. Kind of hope. The kind that really lasts. Not the pretend everything is wonderful today. Kind. So it starts painfully and honestly.

With a death that leads to new life. And the beauty of that reality. When you see death leading to new life. We also see in this passage.

That means there is always hope. For new life. In death. And that's true primarily because Jesus has not only endured death.

[16 : 33] But also conquered death for us. That's the glory of Easter right? Not just the cross. Not just that Jesus came to die. But the empty tomb. He didn't just endure death.

He conquered it. He rose to new life for us. Do you know what image Isaiah uses to foreshadow the resurrection? We get a little foreshadowing of the empty tomb too.

It's mostly of the cross in the Old Testament. But you get glimpses of resurrection too. Guess what image Isaiah uses? It's the image of a victory parade. Soldiers coming back from battle triumphant.

Look at verse 12. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many. And he shall divide the spoil with the strong. There's that picture from that culture.

Of the conquering army coming back from battle. To cheers and shouts and rejoicing. And the soldiers gathering around to share the spoil of war.

[17 : 32] The victory that they've won. And the benefits that come from it. It's the picture from those soldiers rejoicing that victory is theirs.

That there's spoil to be shared. That there's plenty to go around. And Jesus has returned from the grave as the victor over death itself.

That's the picture that we're given. Paul says it this way in 1 Corinthians 15 when he's talking about Jesus' resurrection. When the perishable puts on the imperishable.

And the mortal puts on immortality. Then shall come to pass the saying that is written. Death is swallowed up in victory. O death where is your victory?

O death where is your sting? The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory. Through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[18 : 33] Jesus has conquered death for us. He's the victor. So there's always hope for new life. In death. It's in all three of the verses that we're looking at this morning.

In verse 10 we've talked about where we see the death there. He's making an offering for guilt. And even right as he does that in the midst of death there. He shall see his offspring.

He shall prolong his days. There's life for him and others after him. Right in the midst of death. And the will of the Lord there.

The will of the Lord that crushed him at the beginning of verse 10. Now does what? The same will of the Lord begins to prosper in his hand. He lives and he reigns.

Over all. Verse 11. The anguish of his soul. Out of the midst of that anguish. He's going to see and be satisfied. There's life and death.

[19 : 35] Even in the midst of sorrow. Even in the darkest days. He sees something and is satisfied. And then verse 12 is the picture of the victory parade.

Why is there a victory parade? How come he gets to divide the spoil? Because he poured out his soul to death. Death. It's because death was right in the midst of it.

That there's joy and life. And victory. Over and over again. New life coming in the midst of death. That hope is constantly there for those following Jesus.

And it's there for those following Jesus. Not just for Jesus himself. Because of what he lives to do. What's he doing? Why is it helpful in this passage that he lives on?

He lives, Isaiah says, to collect his people as it were. To see his offspring. To make many righteous. Verse 11.

[20 : 33] He's going to be numbered with transgressors. He's going to bear their sins. He's going to represent our cause to God. He does that actively. Jesus wins.

He gets the parade. But so does his team. So do all those on his team. And what team is he on? How do you know? What team is Jesus on?

Oh, he joined the transgressors team. He was numbered with the transgressors. The ones who deserved only death.

The failures. The sorrowful ones. It even makes sense in this passage to say that it's those transgressors that are his spoil.

The ones he receives when he conquers death. He rescues them from death. And the Bible says God the Father gives them to his Son as a gift. We are his treasure.

[21 : 33] There is hope for new life for us too. In the face of death. So what does that mean for those following Jesus in this world?

First it means that followers of Jesus should face their failures honestly. Because we acknowledge that we're exactly what that passage just said we were.

That we're a community of transgressors. Not the ones who figured it all out. That Southwood Presbyterian Church sounds nice. But we could say Southwood Transgressors Church.

It's a gathering of people who don't have it together. Right? Who didn't figure it out on our own. But who came to find hope in Jesus. We shouldn't be what the church is often known as.

Those who think they've got it all together and tell you where you don't. We should be as honest about our sin as we are about our pain and suffering. We can be honest because no matter how bad it is it's never hopeless.

[22 : 37] Right? That's why the pastor could tell you last week that he got angry and yelled at his kids. And to his shame he could say this is what happened.

Because that's not where our hope is. He doesn't share that because he's proud of it. But because our hope is not in a pastor performing well.

I sure hope it's not. But in a Savior who performs perfectly. And then dies for those who couldn't perform well.

And rose to give them and me new life. Followers of Jesus should also be people then of hope and life.

Not just people of tears. But people who see hope in tears. Who bring the hope and life into today that Jesus brings into eternity.

[23 : 34] Wherever things seem dead and broken and hopeless. We should be those who bring glimpses of life and hope. Into a troubled school. Into a lifeless neighborhood.

Into a struggling company. Into a broken family. Into a depressed heart. Into a hopeless life. The hope of heaven. The hope of new life.

That breaks through into death now. Because it's true forever. Because we are his spoil. We are his treasure. That Jesus shares his new life with.

We get to share it with others. I want to share with you this morning. Two stories. Of the hope of new life. In the face of death.

Before we close. One is of Kyle and Jen Porter. Whom I've never met. I recently read Kyle's account of their story.

[24 : 31] After their third child died. At the end of the pregnancy. And was stillborn. Kyle faced the suffering honestly. Much of what he writes.

Is of the awful pain. And grief. Of losing a daughter. They had already come to love. And then he wrote this. The sorrow that flowed that week.

Is an unspeakable thing. And we can truthfully say. That the Lord is good in both. If not greater in the sorrow. That was what we tried to point to all week.

That we do not hope in our children. That we do not hope in each other. That we do not hope in our friends. Or our families. Or in anything. Outside the crucifixion. And resurrection of Jesus.

That is all in Christ alone. This was a wild reminder of that. One we didn't want. But always need. He continues.

[25 : 32] Christ is everything. Or he's nothing. We lost so much. But gained so much more. We got so much more of the Lord. Than we ever have before.

We got more of the Lord. Than I knew was possible. For a human to get. And he finishes his story. Talking about heaven. And their hope for the future.

He says this. Heaven is a place I want to be. Not to see the girl I lost. Although that will be a good thing. But it is a pale and pathetic thing.

Compared to seeing in full. The God who willingly chose. That which I would never dream. Of choosing. I want to meet my daughter. Yes.

But what I really long for. Is to meet the father. Who gave his son. In the face of unspeakable pain. And death.

[26 : 30] Honestly. Looked at. The hope. Of new life. Because the hope. Is not anything. Other than Jesus. That's the only hope there.

Christ is everything. Everything. I also want to tell you about Carrie. Who would also tell you this morning.

Of pain in life. Who would also tell you. You can have hope for new life. And that it's all about Jesus. I hope many of you will get the chance.

To meet Carrie sometime. He's in that picture up there. In the red shirt. Because I didn't think. Have any idea. That he was coming this morning. And he made me promise.

Not to talk about him very much. But to talk about Jesus. That was my only instruction. Before I got up here this morning. From Carrie. I met Carrie. A couple of years ago.

[27 : 28] When he walked into the front door. Of the church office. Needing money to pay. For his utility bill. He'd just been. Released from prison. Actually. When he.

Came by that day. He'd been released. Because he was dying. Carrie'd been in prison. Most of his life. For crimes. He committed as a young man.

Including murder. Multiple life sentences. That he was facing. He didn't enjoy. Much of the. Pleasures of life. That. That you may know. But he was dying of cancer.

And. Deemed no threat. To others. And released. To die. He's facing that reality. Any day now. But Carrie has great hope.

There hasn't been a lot. That Carrie's had to live for. In this life. He'd tell you that. But. Carrie is. Looking forward. To his life. Really getting started.

[28 : 28] He can't wait. To be with Jesus. See. They met in prison. After. Carrie had searched. Several other religions.

Looking for. Hope. Instead of finding religion. Carrie met. Jesus. And found true. Life. In him. Now.

Even though he is in. Immense pain. All the time. Even though he. Hardly has the strength. To get up. Out of bed. Carrie. Exudes.

Hope. And life. Just to. Be with him. You feel that. A guy in prison. Once asked him. To stop. Talking about Jesus. So much.

And talk about. Something else. To which. Carrie replied. What else am I going to talk about? Jesus is my life. That's what you said. Isn't it? What else am I going to talk about?

[29 : 24] Jesus is my life. Of course I'm going to talk. About Jesus. All the time. Now whether he's in a hospital. Or a nursing home. Or talking to a pastor.

He's always. Talking about Jesus. Seeking to offer the hope. Of new life. To anyone who will listen. To others facing death. With him. Carrie desperately.

Wants to offer. The hope. Of new life. This joy. Every day now. I have learned. So much. From Carrie.

You would too. If you get a few minutes. With him. Doctors tell Carrie. That he will die. Very soon. But he's quite confident. That he is just starting.

To live. And he's sure of it. You can ask him. That's what it looks like. To have hope of life. In the face of death.

[30 : 18] That our hope. Is actually in something. That's bigger than something. We can get our hands around. And enjoy. For a few minutes. Or a few years. But to have eternal.

Hope. You know. A lot of Christians. Are not so clear. As these two stories. I just told. On Jesus being. What life. Is all about. If you look at.

Many of us. You'd think our hope. Is tied up. In a lot of other things. If you're here. This morning. And you're not. A follower of Christ. I just wanted to say. A couple things to you.

First being. We're so glad you're here. If you're not. A follower of Christ. But you haven't. Experienced. Christians. Like this. Followers of Christ.

Living the way. We say. We should. Live. As followers of Christ. Just know. Please know. It's true. Of Jesus.

[31 : 12] Jesus. He lives. That way. He faced. Suffering and pain. Honestly. He was a man. Of tears. Who sought. Not to get ahead.

But to lay his life. Down. For others. He faced. Our failures. Honestly. Identifying. With us. In our sin. And taking the punishment. Our failures.

Deserved. And he's a man. Of hope. And life. He rose. From the dead. To offer. New. Life. To the most.

Hopeless. And dead. People. No matter. How impossible. That seems. To you. He lives. Today. To tell you. It's not. You too. Can have new. Life. He's the victor.

Who offers you. Fullness. Of life. Sharing. In his. Victory. With him. What after all. Does winning. Look like. In this.

[32 : 06] Crazy. Upside down. Life. What's success. In this world. Jesus has an upside down answer to the question of success and winning in this life.

He shows us that the path up is actually down first. If you follow him the path it goes down before it goes up. As Isaiah foretells.

Jesus shows us that winning is not as we usually think of it as scoring more points than the other team. Having more stuff. Gaining the most fame.

Enjoying the most fun. But winning rather. Is having little. But having Jesus. And the new life he offers.

Through and in death. And so. Having little. But like Kyle. And Jen. And like Carrie. Having everything. Because Jesus. Because Jesus. Is everything.

[33 : 07] This is the way Paul says it in. First Corinthians 15. If. If only for this life. We have hope in Christ. We are of all people. Most to be pitied. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.

The first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. So you haven't seen anything yet. He says. The hope for your life is not something you're experiencing in fullness right now. It gets better.

He's the first fruits. There's more victory coming. It's not just for this life that he gives you hope. It's forever. For life. Everlasting. So ultimately followers of Jesus should find their hope.

In Jesus. In his death in our place. And his life today and forever. Standing before God on our behalf. Whether we do all the other shoulds.

Or not. Do them very well. We should be people who make much of Jesus. Not of ourselves. He is our ultimate hope.

[34 : 09] Not us. He is our great king. He is our risen savior. Because he is the one who endures death. Who conquers death. And as he does.

Brings new life. Let's pray. Jesus. Jesus you are our hope. We like to grab on to many other things.

And think they're going to fulfill us. But we know what's true. Is that nothing compares to the surpassing greatness. Of knowing you. And being with you forever.

Enjoying fullness of life. Would you teach us that from your word. Would you teach us that in our lives. Would you show us the emptiness of other things. And the fullness of Jesus.

That we might truly make much of him. That we might find our hope and our joy. In him alone. And we ask it in his name.

[35 : 12] Amen. For more information. Visit us online. At southwood.org