

Responsibility of the Suffering Servant

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Introduction

A boy named Tom carried his new boat to the edge of the river. He carefully placed it in the water and slowly let out the string. How smoothly the boat sailed!

Tom sat in the warm sunshine, admiring the little boat that he had built. Suddenly, a strong current caught the boat. Tom tried to pull it back to shore, but the string broke. The little boat raced downstream.

Tom ran along the sandy shore as fast as he could. But his little boat soon slipped out of sight. All afternoon he searched for the boat. Finally, when it was too dark to look any longer, Tom sadly went home.

A few days later, on the way home from school, Tom spotted a boat just like his in a store window. When he got closer, he could see -- sure enough -- it was his!

Tom hurried to the store manager: "Sir, that's my boat in your window! I made it!"

"Sorry, son, but someone else brought it in this morning. If you want it, you'll have to buy it for one dollar."

Tom ran home and counted all his money. Exactly one dollar! When he reached the store, he rushed to the counter. “Here’s the money for my boat.” As he left the store, Tom hugged his boat and said, “Now you’re twice mine. First, I made you and now I bought you.”

The passage we are looking at this morning comes from Isaiah 52 and 53. This passage was written over 800 years *before* the birth of Jesus Christ.

It is a powerful prophecy and shows that God had a plan from the beginning to redeem and restore His people that He loved even more than Tom loved his boat.

(Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12)

This morning, we’ll see that God’s suffering servant was responsible for four tasks. Firstly, he was...

I. Responsible to Act Wisely (vs. 52:13-15).

A. The servant was high and lifted up.

- The servant was to be lifted up and exalted.
- This picture is seen earlier in Isaiah as the Lord in his throne room.

- **Isaiah 6:1**

¹In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.

- Like the Lord, the servant was to be high and lifted up and exalted.
 - Jesus, as God's suffering servant, was and is God himself.
 - As God, he is worthy to be worshiped, exalted, and lifted up.
 - He is worthy to be praised and magnified.
 - By exalting Jesus, we bring him glory and honor him.
 - Only Jesus is to be praised! Only Jesus is to be magnified!
- B. People were astonished at his appearance.
- Even though he is worthy to be worshiped, the people were astonished by what he looked like.

- His flogging by the Romans was brutal. The Jesus people had seen days earlier was not recognizable.
- During the flogging, the Romans would use a whip that had pieces of bone attached to the end along with metal or glass.
- These pieces would grab and rip the skin off of the person's body.
- Anyone who saw him after the flogging would have been astonished at what he looked like.

C. He acted wisely by making atonement.

- Yet, even through that brutal torture, the servant acted wisely.
- To act wisely in this context was to be successful in one's task.
- The servant succeeded and prospered in the task he was given.
- Jesus, likewise, was successful and succeeded in the task God gave him.

- His primary task was to die for our sins and to make atonement. He acted wisely by doing for us what we did not deserve.
- **Romans 3:21-25**
*²¹But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—
²²the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.*
- God put forth Jesus to die for our sins and to redeem us through his blood.
- His atonement was sufficient and fulfilled his primary task.
- His secondary task was to teach and train 12 men who would be able to continue his ministry after he was gone.

- The timid, scared disciples at Jesus's arrest became bold proclaimers after Jesus's resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit.
- The Spirit worked through them to multiply Jesus's ministry.
- **Acts 2:41**
⁴¹So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.
- Jesus was responsible to act wisely and did so perfectly. His perfect obedience to God's will allowed for our unmerited redemption.

Transition: Secondly, he was...

II. Responsible to Be Rejected (vs. 53:1-3).

- A. The servant had no form or majesty to attract people.
- The suffering servant of Isaiah 53 was not an attractive person.
 - Typically, attractive people gather people to them because people want to be associated with the pretty people.

- The servant was not like that. No one gathered to Jesus because of what he looked like.
- They gathered because of his message.
- Jesus's liberating message of freedom from sins was revolutionary in the 1st century and people flocked to him.
- His healing ministry and miracle working demonstrated the kingdom of God at work in the midst of the people.
- People gravitated to that. They wanted to be a part of that. It's the same way today.
- When people in our communities see God working, they want to be a part of that.
- They want to associate themselves with what God is doing and to have a little of it rub off onto them and in their lives.
- Jesus didn't attract people because of his looks. He attracted people because his message brought life.

- His life-giving message was what brought him at odds with the religious leaders of the day.
- B. He was despised and rejected by men.
- The suffering servant here was described as despised, rejected, scorned, looked down on, and passed over.
 - Rejection of the servant reveals how misguided the human mind is.
 - When the people rejected Jesus, they did so at the instigation of the Pharisees and Sadducees.
 - They stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release a known murderer and to reject the Messiah.
 - The people's rejection of Jesus as the suffering servant allowed for God's will to be done.
 - People are still rejecting Jesus. People today are still asking for the wrong thing.
 - It's sad to see them want someone or something else besides the one who can set them free.
 - Even though Jesus is rejected by some, there are others who do not reject him.

- Those of us who have placed our faith and trust in him don't look on him with scorn or despise him.
- We marvel at what he has done and his grace and mercy toward us.
- Let us take that amazement to others. Let us share that amazement with the ones who reject him and perhaps God will lead them to himself.

C. The servant was a man of sorrows acquainted with grief.

- Man of sorrows, Lamb of God. By his own betrayed. The sin of man and wrath of God has been on Jesus laid.
- This opening verse in the song says it all.
- Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and suffering.
- Jesus experienced sorrow and grief of various sorts throughout his whole life.
- He was run out of towns. He was rejected by his family. He was ridiculed by the crowds.

- Later, he would be flogged. He would be beaten. He would be rejected again and again then nailed to a cross.
- He bore our sorrows and our shame so that we would not have to.
- He took it all on himself and the people didn't care. They esteemed him not.
- The suffering servant was just that. He suffered and paid the ultimate price for you and me.
- He didn't do it because he had to. He did it because he wanted to. He did it because he loves us.
- The love of Jesus shines through the suffering and sorrow he experienced on the cross.

Transition: Thirdly, he was...

III. Responsible to Be a Sacrifice (vs. 4-6).

- A. The servant bore our griefs and sorrows.
- Acting as his people's substitute, with no support or understanding from them, the servant took upon himself the bitter consequences of their sin.

- Jesus bore our griefs and sorrows. He willingly did this.
- **Matthew 8:14-17**
¹⁴And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. ¹⁵He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him. ¹⁶That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. ¹⁷This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases."
- Whether physical ailments or spiritual sickness, Jesus touched the lives of people.
- He went out of his way to heal people's physical and spiritual condition.
- Likewise, the sufferings of the servant would show the consequences that sin brings to fallen humanity, though he himself would not sin.
- Jesus never sinned. He was the only one without sin.
- He lived a sinless life. A perfect life.

- **Hebrews 4:14-15**

¹⁴Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

- **2 Corinthians 5:21**

²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- Because Jesus was sin for us, God placed all of those griefs and sorrows on him so that we might become the righteousness of God.

B. He was pierced and crushed for our sins.

- Isaiah emphasizes how severely God punished the rejected servant for the sins of mankind.
- The servant was pierced for our transgressions. This was fulfilled when Jesus was stabbed by a Roman spear and having nails driven through his hands and feet.
- He was crushed for our iniquities. The chastisement that brought peace was on him.

- Jesus's body was beaten and crushed in such a way that there was no doubt that he suffered.
- And by his wounds we are healed. One version says, "By his stripes we are healed."
- His stripes, his wounds from the flogging and the crucifixion allowed the saving blood to flow.
- The blood is important.

- **1 John 1:7**

⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

- **Colossians 1:19-20**

¹⁹For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

- **Ephesians 2:13-14**

¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.

- Our peace with God can only come through the sacrifice of Jesus his Son.
 - The blood of Jesus Christ is the only thing that can heal us from the taint of sin.
- C. Our sin and iniquity was placed on him.
- We are like sheep. Sheep are dumb. They like to go anyway they want but often get into precarious situations.
 - Like the parable Jesus told of one sheep getting lost and the shepherd leaving the 99 to find it, sheep wander off.
 - We have all gone astray. We seek after that which makes us feel good and sounds good to us.
 - God has allowed us to turn to our own ways. Yet, we are still responsible for our own choices.
 - We sin. We don't do what God commands. Therefore, we are condemned.
 - Even though we have all gone astray, God placed the sins of each and every one of us on Jesus Christ.

- **Romans 5:6-10**

⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

- Jesus's taking our iniquities on himself brings peace, reconciliation, and sets us back on the right path with God.
- He gave it all. His responsibility to be a sacrifice should enable us to now live our lives in sacrifice to him.
- Give your life to Jesus. Let his life fill you and free you from the bonds of sin.
- Let his life guide you as you now live for the one who died for your sins.

Transition: And finally, he was...

IV. Responsible to Follow God's Will (vs. 7-12).

- A. The servant did not fight against God's will.
- The suffering servant willingly gave his life because he knew it was God's will.
 - He didn't open his mouth to protest. He didn't fight his way out. He did no violence whatsoever.
 - When Jesus was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane, he could've taken action.
 - But he didn't.
 - **Matthew 26:51-54**
⁵¹And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. ⁵²Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. ⁵³Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?"
 - Jesus could've called down more than twelve legions of angels!

- A Roman legion typically contained 5,000 soldiers. That would have been at least 60,000 angels!
- Certainly 60,000 angels would have been able to keep Jesus from being arrested.
- But that's not what he did. He knew the scriptures needed to be fulfilled and Isaiah 53 would not have been able to be fulfilled if he fought back.
- Jesus had the big picture in mind. Even though Peter cut off the ear of one of the servants, Jesus said to not fight back.
- Jesus was like a lamb led to the slaughter. He refused to open his mouth before Pilate save a few times.
- He never protested or tried to talk his way out of it.
- Jesus wanted to do the Father's will. His prayer in Gethsemane was, "Not my will, but yours be done."
- That should be our prayer as well.

B. It was the will of God to crush him.

- Verse 10 says that it was God's will to go crush the servant. He had a purpose for doing so.
- It pained God severely to crush his Son, but it was necessary for the salvation of you and me.
- The servant's sacrificial death compensated for human sin by setting sinners free from their guilt before God.
- The middle part of verse 10 says, "when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring."
- This offspring would be the sheep that went astray. In other words, the offspring of Jesus's sacrifice is you and me.
- Through Jesus's death, we can return as children of God through adoption.
- **Galatians 4:4-5**
⁴But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

- His death, his being crushed by God, allowed us to be adopted as sons into God's family.
- Even more so, verse 10 continues saying, "he shall prolong his days."
- How can the servant prolong his days if he just died? The answer is resurrection.
- Even here in Isaiah 53, 800 years before the birth of Jesus, we have an implicit reference to his resurrection.
- Though he would be crushed, he would rise again. Though he would suffer, he would rise again. Though he would endure grief and agony, he would rise again.
- That is what Easter is all about.

Conclusion

Jesus was the perfect fulfillment of the suffering servant found in Isaiah. He took his responsibility seriously. He was responsible to act wisely, to be rejected, to be a sacrifice, and to follow God's will.

We can never sacrifice the way Jesus did. His was redemptive and satisfactory to God. But we can act wisely. We can be rejected by the world because we follow Jesus.

We can sacrifice our time and talents to further God's kingdom living our lives through the life of Jesus. We can follow God's will for our lives.

God wants us to tell others about his suffering servant. Let this Easter be a time when you tell others all about the good news of Jesus, our suffering servant. Let this Easter be a time when you renew your commitment to the one who suffered and died for us.

If you're here this morning and you've never heard of Jesus, now is your time to respond. Trust in Jesus and in what he did for you on the cross. Give Him your life today.

If you're here this morning and you know that God wants you to join this church, I invite you to come and join. We're going to have a time of invitation in a few moments, and I'll be standing down front here. If you want to talk about any of these things or simply come and pray, this will be your time to do so.

Whatever your need is this morning, this altar will be open. Let's pray, and then you come and respond as the Lord is leading you.