

The Servant: The Servant Satisfied

Isaiah 52:13–53:12

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Now if you would please take your copies of God's holy Word in your hands and turn with me to Isaiah 52 at verse 13, which you'll find on page 613. We are concluding a series of sermons meditating on the great Song of the Suffering Servant found in 52:13 through 53 [verse] 12. So once you have your Bibles open there, let's bow our heads as we ask for God to help us before we hear the Word of God read. Let us pray.

Our Father, as we have been singing and meditating on the first coming of Jesus, the baby of Bethlehem, help us now as we think about the climactic moment of His earthly ministry when He gave Himself, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, at Calvary. Help us to come again to the cross in renewed repentance and in wonder, in faith and in trust, and in adoration and praise. Speak Your Word to us, we pray, in the anointing and power of Your Spirit for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Isaiah 52 at verse 13. This is the Word of Almighty God:

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, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his

stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned - every one - 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; 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.

Amen, and we give thanks to God that He has spoken to us in His holy Word.

From The Cradle to The Cross

It is, I think, immensely helpful for us at a time when we are dwelling on the manger at Bethlehem to be sure to turn our attention to the cross at Golgotha because the cross is the reason for the cradle. They say, it has been said, that biography should not start with a person's birth with rather with their death. This is what their life has been about. And so as we contemplate together the coming, the birth of Christ, it is useful to remember why He came. And so while Isaiah's fourth Servant Song is hardly a typical Advent text, in many ways I think it's imminently suitable. It takes us to the foot of Calvary and it reminds us why the baby was born of a virgin and wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger. And several of our finest Christmas carols make precisely that point. We sang one of them earlier - "Why lies he in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding? Good Christian, fear, for sinners here the silent Word is pleading. Nails, spear, shall pierce him through. The cross be borne for me, for you. Hail, Hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the son of Mary." And so our task tonight, in a sense, is to strip away, just for a few moments together, the tinsel and the lights, to get to the grit and the glory that mark the coming of Christ to bleed and atone for sinners like you and me. And there is nowhere better suited to help us do that than Isaiah's song of the Suffering Servant.

You remember that the song is structured in five stanzas. And so when we looked at chapter 52 verses 13 to 15 we saw how the Servant succeeds. That's stanza number one. Then 53:1-3, the second stanza of the song, the Servant scorned. People reject Him. Then 53:4-6, the third stanza, the Servant sacrificed. Our focus was on the meaning of His death in our place as our atoning sacrifice. Then we looked last time at verses 7 to 9, the fourth stanza, the Servant stricken, as the prophet recounts for us the facts of His immolation and His suffering. And so tonight we've come to the concluding stanza of the song, verses 10 through 12 of chapter 53. Here we meet the Servant satisfied. The Servant satisfied.

The Servant Satisfied

Let's take a look at the passage together for a few moments. Verses 10 through 13 please; 10 through 12, I beg your pardon. Notice that in each verse there is a common thread that lends coherence and unity to this section. Each verse speaks about the soul of the Servant. The Hebrew word is "nephesh," His life, His inmost self. And wherever the passage mentions His soul, you see this in the text, wherever it mentions Christ's soul it is always in order to tell us about His suffering, His sacrifice, and His death. So look at verse 10. When His soul makes an offering for guilt, He shall see His offspring, and so on. His soul will be made a gift offering, a sacrifice, that atones for sin and guilt. Or verse 11, "Out of the anguish of His soul He shall see and be satisfied." His soul will be plunged, immersed, into the agony of the cross. Verse 12, "He poured out His soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors." He died for sinners, in the place of sinners, though He Himself was not a sinner. And so there's a consistent thread binding these verses together and really linking them to the whole chapter. The sacrificial, atoning death of Christ.

But I also want you to notice, alongside the fundamental unity of these three climactic verses, that each verse brings its own unique accent to that theme. We said that this final stanza of Isaiah's prophetic treatment of Christ's cross-work could be named, "The Servant Satisfied." But actually, as we'll see, each verse highlights a different person or group of people who enter into satisfaction because of the work of Christ.

Look at the passage. Verse 10 - it is the Father, or rather the Father's plan, that is satisfied. Verse 11 - it is the Servant Himself who is satisfied. And then in verse 12 as we will see - we are satisfied. And we're going to look at each of those in turn.

I. The Father is Satisfied

Verse 10, first of all - the Father is satisfied. Notice how the verse begins and

ends - "with the will of the Lord." Here is the heart of God the Father. Here is the inner driving burden of the Father. This is His plan and His purpose and His decree. It is the will of the Lord to crush Him. He has put Him to grief. We could translate that, "It pleased the Lord to crush Him." The good pleasure of God rests on the Servant as He bore our sin at Calvary. It was, after all, the Father's plan. It's not that that Son designed and purposed to wrestle from an unwilling deity acceptance for guilty sinners by dying for them as though to force the Father's hand. What a monstrous distortion of the Gospel that idea would be. The Father Himself we learn purposed the cross. He sent His Son in pursuit of the accomplishment of His will. It pleased the Lord. It was the will of the Lord to crush Him. Jesus has never needed to persuade the Father to love you, believing sinner. It was the love of the Father that sent Him on His saving errand. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." The cross, you've heard me say it before, the cross is the pulpit of the Father's love. "God demonstrates His love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us." "How deep the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure, that He should give His only Son to make a wretch His treasure."

Willed by the Father, Chosen by the Son: The Covenant of Redemption

And do also notice the marvelous balance of the text. Not only has the Father willed the cross but the Son, His Servant, chose the cross. The will of the Lord, the other end of the verse, the will of the Lord prospers in His hand. The Servant gladly undertakes the Father's mission and He perfectly succeeds in its execution. The Son never fails to perform what the Father purposes. The will of the Lord prospers. It succeeds in His hand. He effectively saves all whom the Father eternally chose. The cross secures forever what the Father planned in eternity. Or as Jesus puts it in John 6:37, "All that the Father gives me shall come to me." Or John 17:12, "I have guarded them and not one of them are lost." The heartbeat of the Father's plan is satisfied by the obedience of Jesus Christ. "For this reason the Father loves me," Jesus says - John 10:17. "The good pleasure, the approbation, the delight of the Father, His everlasting satisfaction rests on Me for this reason - because I lay My life down that I may take it up again. This charge I have received. This command I have received from My Father." Within the fellowship of the blessed Trinity, before the dawn of creation, the Father entered into covenant to save a people for Himself out of the mass of fallen humanity by means of the cross of His Son. This charge He gave to His Son before the stars were hung in their places. He said to Him, "Go and take flesh and be born as one of them. Go and mature and learn obedience for them. Go and be despised and rejected by them. Go and be condemned and bleed for them. Go, be made sin for them and die in their place." This was the charge, this was the will of the Lord entrusted to His Servant, His Son. The will of the Lord to crush Him, and it was a will that the Son gladly embraced. He took flesh and dwelt among us. He shouldered the crushing burden of our disobedience and He said, "Father, not My will but Yours be done," until He could say at the last, "Father, it is finished. I have done Your will and the work is

accomplished.” For this reason the Father loves His Servant. The good pleasure of the Lord rests on His Servant because He lays down His life for the sheep. I think it was Derek Thomas who put it this way, that at the cross is the full horror of omnipotent justice, exacted complete payment for my sin. There, the Father looked on the Son and said, “If ever I have loved thee, in this moment of exquisite agony as You bear the sin of My people, as You purchase for Me all whom I have purposed to redeem, if ever I have loved thee, My Jesus, tis now.” The will of the Lord prospers in His hand for this reason, “The Father loves Me that I lay down My life.” The Father is satisfied with His Servant.

II. The Servant is Satisfied

Then secondly, look down at verse 11. The Servant Himself is satisfied. “Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied.” The Son will observe the fruits, the outcome of His soul anguish, His “travail” as older versions put it. He will see it and it will satisfy Him. What is it exactly that He sees? Look at the text. “By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous and he shall bear their iniquities.” His righteous sin-bearing will make many accounted righteous. Justification, right standing before God, comes to us because our iniquities were borne by Him and this work, Isaiah says, is a kind of knowledge. “By his knowledge shall the righteous one make many to be accounted righteous.” The Servant of the Lord, the eternal Son made flesh, “learned obedience by the things that He suffered,” Hebrews 5 and verse 8. He entered into experiential, personal knowledge in His human nature of suffering and sin-bearing and condemnation and curse. And as He fathomed by experience the depths of what He had only ever known by omnipotence and by eternal covenant in the Father’s plan, as He fathomed by experience the depths of sin-bearing obedience, there He accomplished our justification. And so the Servant surveys His work. “What have I accomplished? Has it been worth it, all this pain, all the horror and the darkness and the dereliction of the cross?” Yes. Yes, it’s been worth it. He sees your face. He sees your face, believer in Jesus. In the crowd of the redeemed, He sees God the Father counting you righteous in His sight. Even though you’re not righteous you’re wearing the righteousness of another. It’s Christ’s righteousness, His Servant, and He sees your face in the innumerable company of the saints around His throne with their robes washed in the blood of the Lamb. He sees you there radiant with the cleansing power and efficacy of His cross and He is satisfied. You are a source of satisfaction to the heart of Jesus Christ. He bought and paid for you. You are His and He delights in you. He is satisfied by the salvation His wounds have won for you. You bring satisfaction to the heart of Jesus. You are beloved.

III. We are Satisfied

The Father is satisfied, Christ is satisfied, and then finally we are satisfied. Look

at verse 12. The second half of the verse summarizes familiar themes, themes we've been tracing out all the way through this chapter. Christ poured out His soul to death; He is numbered with the transgressors. That is to say, He died and everyone thought He died guilty and deserving His fate. Look at the text - "yet he bore the sin of many." That's what really was taking place when He was nailed to the tree. That's what was really happening. His death is the death of a substitute, a stand-in, a replacement. He died that I might live. Our sin on His shoulders, our sentence paid for by Christ. And even more, He makes intercession for the transgressors. The same sinners the Father willed to save and for whom Christ died, they are the same for whom He now prays. He ever lives to make intercession for you. He has not washed His hands of you now that He sits at the Father's right hand. You are always on His mind and in His heart as He pleads your name before the Father's throne.

Here's the Gospel in the second half of verse 12. It's the Gospel summarized in a few precious verses. But do look at verse 12 again and you will see that all of that stands as a mighty base rock, an immovable foundation stone for blessing. The first half of the verse, "Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death," and so on. Because He was a sacrifice like this, because He purchased sinners with His blood, here are the consequences. A better translation of the first half of verse 12 might be, "I shall apportion to him the many and he shall apportion the strong as spoil." In other words, the point of the text, certainly the first half of verse 12, is not simply that the Servant, the Lord Jesus, is rewarded along with other people - "among the many Jesus is also rewarded." No, no. Rather, the people, the many, are the reward apportioned to Him. "I shall apportion to him the many," God says. The Servant accounted the many righteous, in verse 12. He intercedes for the many - verse 12. Verse 11 - He accounted the many righteous. And now the same group, those for whom He died, those for whom He prays, they become His reward.

Christ our Great Reward

All of which is simply to say this - in the Gospel, God gives you to Jesus as His reward. You are Christ's reward. You are His crown and His joy and His glory. You become His and He yours. The glory Christ will enjoy will be glory in and among His people. The exaltation into which He is swept now enjoys in reward for His labors is an exaltation made glorious by the presence of a countless number of sinners bought and paid for by His blood. What does God give us in the Gospel? What do you get when you get Jesus? You get to participate in His triumph and to share in His reward. You get to participate in His victory, His enthronement, His glory enfolds and encompasses us. We are given to Him and He to us.

I remember, when I was in ministry in London, being invited by one of my parishioners to a very expensive and exclusive restaurant. Only members,

private members, could eat there. And he happened to be the secretary of the club so he was an important person. I was a nobody from Glasgow. I didn't even know what to do with all the utensils on the table never mind how to conduct myself in this rarified environment but because I was with Mr. Forrest I was treated like royalty that day. The waiters, you know, they ran to do our bidding. The chef came out to make sure that everything was to our liking and tipped his forelock as he returned to the kitchen. Our every need was taken care of. It was amazing. But I only enjoyed it because I was with Mr. Forrest. When you are with Jesus, when you are in Jesus, the glory that really belongs to Him enfolds you too. He brings you in, makes you His prize and His delight. You're engulfed in His greatness and in Him, in heaven's glory, we will never need for anything else again. He will be all satisfying. The Father is satisfied, the Servant is satisfied, we are satisfied.

New Life, New Status, New Destiny

And just as we close, did you notice the three consequences of the Father's plan and the Son's sacrifice? Verse 10 - new life. Born again sons and daughters of God. "He shall see his offspring" - new life. Verse 11 - new status. Justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. "The righteous one, my servant, shall make many to be accounted righteous." Verse 12 - new destiny. Given new life, robed in Christ's righteousness, bound for heaven as the precious reward of the Son of Man. Every need of the human heart is satisfied in Jesus Christ, do you see? New life - offspring. Born again - you become part of the family; you belong at last through Jesus Christ. New status - justified; your guilt is done. You're no longer condemned but accepted. Clean consciences and a clean record if you're trusting in Jesus Christ. And a new destiny - the hope of heaven. At rest in joy and glory forever; security for tomorrow through faith in Jesus Christ. The Father is satisfied in Jesus, Christ is satisfied with His work, and every need of ours may be satisfied in Christ as well. The question for you is, "Do you believe it? Do you believe it? Are you prepared to look to Jesus for the satisfaction your heart craves?" If you will not, you will always run empty. He is all in all and so hear His summons and invitation to satisfaction. "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, come buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread and your labor for what does not satisfy? Listen diligently to Me and eat what is good and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear and come to Me," Jesus says. "Hear, that your soul may live." He is all that you need, and so come to Him. Let us pray.

Our Father, we would flee together anew to Christ that He may be all in all to us. O, forgive us for seeking our satisfaction in the junk food of a broken world that may, for a season, for a fleeting moment, glut our appetites but then leave us as hungry as ever. Bring us to Christ, with whom the Father is satisfied, who is Himself satisfied, that in Him we too may find true satisfaction. For Jesus' sake, amen.

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