

Series: Our Suffering Savior #890

Title: Isaiah 53

Introduction

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world! As we finish the week together, I want to say that I hope you will enjoy the weekend. And I am hopeful and prayerful that where you live you will be able to get gather again with the people of God, whether that be in your home, or a park (somewhere outside), or even in the sanctuary of your local church. And that as you gather, you will worship God. He is worthy, O so worthy, of our all our love, adoration, and praise. Let it be that God is highly exalted among us!

For those of you who are unable to be with other believers, I pray. Maybe you're still under lockdown? Maybe you are nervous or anxious about going out with the virus still circulating? And/or maybe you are in the hospital or a nursing home or in your own apartment and house and cannot get out much anymore. Whatever the reason is, I pray you will not lose heart. Do not be discouraged or depressed. Jesus is with you. As a Christian, the Holy Spirit lives in you. You are never alone.

Be aware of this, my dear friend: I am thinking of and praying for *you*. For all who feel lonely, tired, isolated, and forgotten, I tell you: God will never forget you. You there, in whatever circumstance you find yourself, turn to Jesus Christ and invite Him to meet your needs.

As you are probably aware, one week from today all who belong to Christ will solemnly remember His death on the cross for our sins. One week from today is Good Friday, with Resurrection Sunday to follow a couple of days later. As we enter this time when we remember what our Lord has done for us, I want to take some time to reflect on Jesus with you.

Last time we finished our discussion on the providence of God, related to our ongoing journey through Genesis chapter 3. And I am eager to get back to the Genesis 3 text at verse 6. And we *will* do that very soon. But first, this intermission, in preparation for the death and resurrection of our Lord, some days together to think about Him. To do this, I have chosen the Old Testament Book of Isaiah, chapter 53 and verses 1-3 to be our text. You can mark this in your Bible: Isaiah 53.1-3.

In a few minutes I will read the passage for us. But first I just want to lay out for you my recent meditations on Jesus Christ. You need to know this about me. I love Him. And I love Him because He first loved me. I cherish Him as my Lord, my Savior, and my King. There is no more important person in my life than Jesus. There never has been, and there never will be. My strongest desire and most glorious hope is to see Him face-to-face. I eagerly anticipate and I eagerly pray for His appearing in the clouds and to hear His voice as He calls all who have believed *in* Him home. He told us,

“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also.” (That is the promise of Jesus in John 14 to everyone who believes in Him by faith.)

Brothers and sisters, we have dwelling places prepared for us. And Jesus is coming again to take us there to heaven where we shall live forever and ever in His presence. Do you love Jesus? Has He captured the affection of your heart and soul? If your answer to this question is “yes,” then do you feel like I feel? Our most cherished Lord is being terribly mistreated today. I do not know where specifically you live, but in this interconnected world, Christians everywhere listen and watch as Christ is dismissed, despised, rejected, mocked, and scorned. And this is deeply hurtful for us, because we love Him so much.

We live in a godless, pagan, and heathen culture dominated by hatred of God and an obsessive love of the self. Idols of all sorts are shaped, molded, built and worshiped while the Only Wise God is ignored, as if He does not even exist. What is this being called, a “cancel culture?” Well then there is no one the mob has set out to

cancel with greater urgency than our Lord. The enemies of Christ are busy trying to erase Him from the American and Canadian and Mexican and European and African and Asian and Middle Eastern conscience. He is rejected while all other abhorrent forms of gods and goddesses are embraced. Do you think I am exaggerating? Pay attention! Wake up and keep watch with me.

Jesus' words to us in John chapter 15 are prophetic and so have come true. John 15, verse 18, **"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you."** One manifestation of hatred for Jesus is hatred for all who follow Him. And hate is the right word. If you take a stand for Jesus today, if you go public and testify to who He is and what He means to you, if you dare to boldly proclaim Him to be the Savior of the world, and if you call people to repentance from sin through Christ, you will be hated. This is obvious, so I do not need to say much more about it.

But I have been thinking of this, and that led me directly to Isaiah's words in his fifty-third chapter. Listen to what the Jewish people thought of Jesus at the time of His crucifixion and since. I am reading now Isaiah chapter 53, verses 1-3. **"Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? ² For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. ³ He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him."** That's Isaiah 53.1-3 and I invite you to please read this for yourself on the weekend. That will prepare you for our time together.

We will consider the primary context and application of these verses next week. But as a secondary context and application this description of the way Jesus Christ is treated is true now. First, certainly Christians who evangelize, believers who tell others about the Lord can ask, "Who has believed our message?" The answer: very few. Jesus, pushes back the collective voice of the Christ rejecting world, has no majesty that we should look to Him, what's so attractive about Jesus? A poor, homeless, Jewish man that is said to have died on a cross? That has no appeal for us. No. We worship that which is beautiful and handsome and attracts a million likes on our social media. Give us a pop star, or an actor, give us a politician or a prince, give us an athlete or a trans gendering celebrity and we shall worship. But Jesus? No. Worse: let us silence the voice of those, and in many parts of the world let us take the lives of those, who are called "Christians."

Jesus is despised today. This world does not esteem Him.

Isaiah 53 is an accurate, detailed description of the sacrificial death of Christ. This is His substitutionary, atoning death for the sins of we who believe in Him. In fact, this chapter is *the premier* section of the Old Testament that speaks of the Messiah's death. It is written by a Jew for Jews, and it remains the prayer of every Jew that has believed Jesus *is* The Messiah. But take heed, Gentiles, this is also a Word for us.

I believe this great text will help us to set Good Friday in context so that when we get to it, Lord willing, in one week we will be ready, we will be prepared. To the unbelieving world, Jesus is ugly. But to us who believe, Jesus is beautiful. Always we should reflect on His life, and death, and resurrection – all the days of our lives. But it is especially true this coming week that we be mindful of who He is and what He means to us.

This is also a time for us to pray for all the people of the world who despise and reject Christ. You know many people who have no space for Him in their lives. I do too. Let us pray for them. And then we must be aware of the countless millions, still, worldwide who have never heard of Him.

Or, at least have never been given a clear presentation of the gospel in their heart language. Let us pray for the mission of Jesus' redemption to be taken to every nook and cranny of this world. Let us pray for the gospel to be received and believed *today*. Let us pray for missionaries who bear witness to our Lord in countries that are raging with hostility towards them. Let us pray for the persecuted church, for strength and perseverance, and hope in the Lord.

And let us not give up and let us not give in to what our culture demands of us. But let us speak for Christ, let us love Him, and do what He commands of us. Let us count the cost of following our Master. Whatever we do,

let us love our enemies, pray for those who persecute us, and forgive those who sin against us. This is hard to do. But, let us depend on the Holy Spirit to convict us of what our Lord has required of us, His people.

Do you love Jesus? I hope so. Please come back on Monday as we read about Him in Isaiah 53. Join me then for God Is.

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