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CHBC  
January 6, 2008am

*Pierced for our Transgressions:  
Crushed for our Iniquities  
Isaiah 52.13-53.12*

**Introduction:**

A few improbabilities. Improbability number one. A good friend this year gave me as a Christmas gift something he thought I would enjoy: a DVD on Windsor Castle, not on its architecture or history, but on its living community, the servants preparing meals, cleaning, taking care of guests and the grounds. And he was right. I am enjoying it. What can I say? I lived in England for 6 ½ years. Improbability number 2: I've been watching it while spending time on an elliptical machine each morning. Yes, that, too is true. Improbability number 3: my friend—my adult male friend—was upset when he found I'd been watching it without him. Yes, in fact, much to my surprise, Kevin McKay wanted to watch it with me!

In this program on Windsor Castle, front and center are the most amazing collection of servants. A small army of them really. Over 150 live on the castle grounds. They are splendidly dressed, treated with the greatest of care and ~~even~~ respect, especially *even* by the Sovereign herself, and really you can tell that the servants expect this. And, I have to say—perhaps this is the American in me, or perhaps its my fallen pride (maybe those two are related)—I don't know how satisfying I would find a life of such service.

**This morning we want to look at a servant, a famous servant, but one quite different than those I've just described. And considering him might be the key in helping you understand this idea we've been examining about the atonement—penal substitution—that is, a substitute taking for you the penalty you deserve.**

One popular objection to this idea of substitutionary atonement is that such language is quite simply meaningless today. That it employs a vocabulary of sin and punishment that we don't use and we don't understand. But friends, there is a difference between an image, and the reality that image represents. And the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ is not merely an image, your perspective or a way we might want to look at something. It is the something itself that is presented to us in Scripture. We have seen it these last two studies from the books of Moses.

Now, this morning, we go from the Pentatuch, the first five books of the Bible, written by Moses—where we've been the last 2 weeks—to several hundred years on. We go by Joshua, and David and Solomon, the kingdom of Israel is founded and flourishes and divides and declines. And we come to the prophet Isaiah.

And we find something very interesting as we read through the book of Isaiah. It becomes clear that God's great plan for His people and for His world seems to turn on a person. We read in Isaiah 28:16, "~~See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation, the one who trusts will never be dismayed.~~" There was an innate sense of this even in the way that God's people would look to an idolized figure, or to a king (either foreign, or of David's line). But God revealed to Isaiah the prophet that a **Messiah/King would come**. (Really all the kings of Israel & Judah were anointed; but there would be One to end all others). So we read in Isa. 32:1: "a king will

*c. "Messiahs"*

*in  
this  
series*

*reign in righteousness and rulers will rule with justice.*” The king of which David was a preview would come (*Isa. 11:1-5*).

And yet, as we read this prophesy, we get the sense that this will be more than just a good king. There is the famous passage in Isaiah (9:6-7) that we’ve just been hearing around Christmas: *“For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever,”* (cf. *Isa. 42:1; 49*). So a KING would come.

But there is also clearly a Servant that would come. God seems to specially call this one “My servant,” (in 42:1-4 & 49:6-7 & 50:4-10). *If this servant is exalted, could He also be the King?!*

// Throughout all of this prophesy and prediction about God’s provision, the QUESTION CRYING OUT is: HOW WILL A HOLY GOD FORGIVE AND RESTORE SINNERS?

And that question is answered in the famous passage we come to this morning, to what one writer has called the jewel in the crown of Isaiah’s theology. **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**. You’ll find it on page 731 of the Bibles provided in the West Hall, and on page 772 of the Bibles provided here in the Main Hall. **[READ Isa. 52:13-53:12]**

Even atheistic scholars tell us that Jesus’ contribution to theology was this combining of the teaching of a coming Messiah<sup>King</sup> with this teaching of the suffering servant here in Isaiah. Jesus clearly knew and relied on this song to understand and explain His own ministry. In Matthew 8:17, Matthew quotes this verse—Isa. 53:4—to explain Jesus’ exorcisms and healings. He clearly applied the servant passages to Jesus—as Jesus had taught Him. *and he had learned that from Jesus.*

The servant that is presented here is not what we would normally think of as a servant—certainly not the kind of important servants we find at Windsor Castle! This servant is appalling. We find that we actually have despised him. And that GOD laid our sins on Him. That this Servant accepted His substitutionary suffering. And that the Servant would be satisfied. Those are the five stanzas, if you will, of this servant song here in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. We’ll look at them in order. And as we do, I pray that you will be helped to find this servant, if you don’t know Him, and to love this One even better, if you already do.

We begin by looking at the first stanza, and there encountering this servant. And we see that

### **I. This servant is appalling. 52:13-15**

The “song” is introduced in v13 with a summary here: <sup>52:13</sup> *See, my servant will act [deal, do, succeed] wisely [prosper, prudently, well]; he will be raised [honored] and lifted up [extolled, raised] and highly [greatly] exalted [be very high].* God’s servant will act wisely, we learn, and will be exalted. The language for being highly exalted like this is only used elsewhere in the Bible of God Himself. So from the very beginning, we see there is something unique about this Servant’s nature, and His fate. The Servant is going to do something, and God will exalt Him, uniquely. /

But then, in v14, the song turns strangely dark. We learn that many were shocked (prophesy is often expressed in the past tense to show the certainty of its fulfillment)

many were shocked by the servant's appearance. Look at v14: *14 Just as there were many [peoples] who were appalled [astonished, amazed, surprised, horrified] at him [you {ESV}, my people]—his appearance [visage, look, face] was so disfigured [deformed, marred, changed by disease] beyond [more than] that of any man [human semblance] and his form marred beyond human likeness [semblance, of the sons of men, the children of mankind, mortals]—<sup>15</sup>so [thus] will he sprinkle [startle, make worthy, awed] many nations [give him honor], and kings will shut their mouths [stand speechless, keep quiet, be silenced, shocked] because [on account] of [at] him. For what they were not told [been made clear], they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand [consider, ponder].* This surprising message is about the suffering servant who will prepare the world to worship God.

~~Who is this servant? Jesus Christ.~~ fulfilled  
The Servant is described as *appalling, disfigured, marred*—references not, I think, to a native deformity in Jesus Christ, but to the horror of His crucifixion. And it is this <sup>in</sup> horror connected with the servant that makes his effect described here so surprising. In v15, that mention of *sprinkling* many nations is referring to the OT religious practice of sprinkling in order to ceremonially cleanse objects which are about to be admitted to the worship of God. The servant, by means of the message about Him, will have not just a ministry for Israel, but this international ministry! *For what they were not told [been made clear], they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand [consider, ponder].* Even the Gentiles, who were not studying the Jewish OT, would hear, and see, and believe. slowly

Robert Bellah referred, a few years ago, to the religious eclecticism he found in his studies of popular beliefs as “Sheilism”. “Sheila” was a made up character, a composite of many interviews he had done. “She” held a number of unrelated—and even self-contradictory—beliefs, all simply because she liked each one of them. Friend, if you’re not a Christian, I wonder how you would construct your own religion. What would your “Savior/Hero/Chief teacher/Ruler” figure look like? It probably wouldn’t be like the servant in this song. But Christ came as a servant.

What about you, my Christian friend? Jesus came not to be served, but to serve. He came to bring salvation to the world. And as His self-styled followers, what do we do? Do we exalt ourselves, around family, friends, at work? Are we willing to risk our carefully cultivated reputations in order to tell them about Christ? //

This may not seem at first like the most obvious application of this passage, but in Romans 15, when Paul is explaining his own ambition he says that *“It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation. Rather, as it is written: ‘Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand,’”* (Rom. 15:20-21). Paul longed to join in the Servant’s work of taking the message to the nations, and so should we.

My brothers and sisters, have you considered how you are helping in that task? What are you doing to see the Gospel spread to the Nations? You know, even if you stay here in the District, you can choose to live, or to work, or to shop, or to get to know a certain community, and part of your reason for doing that can be so that those who haven’t heard will come to hear and understand.

As a church, we are committed to trying to help proclaim the Gospel to those who’ve never heard it. Thus, if you join our congregation, you’ll find that we stress work

in certain places, and not work elsewhere, where we judge the Gospel to be more readily available.

Anyway, we begin this song with the surprising, even shocking news, of the Servant's disfigurement. The camera, if you will, is squarely on the Servant, and then on the further surprise of His mission to the nations. //

But we should move on. Not only do we find that the servant is appalling, but, we find in the next stanza of the song, WE appear.

## II. We despised the servant. 53:1-3

Now, the nation of Israel seems to speak. And we find the message that the Gentiles, the nations will come to understand, is a message about God's salvation of His people. The question is, it is so extraordinary, so unexpected, who will believe it?! Verse 1: <sup>53:1</sup>Who has [can] believed [had faith in] our message [us, report, what we have heard, what they have heard from us] and to [upon] whom has [had] the arm of the LORD been revealed [unveiled]?

This question implies much unbelief—that is, that the message strikes many as incredible. So in John's gospel, in 12:38, he tells us that "Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet" and then John quotes this verse, Isa. 53:1. Paul, too, turns to this verse to show the widespread rejection of this message among his fellow Jews. Paul says in Rom. 10:16 "But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our message?'"

Why would this message be so incredible? Because, as Isaiah's already begun telling us, the Servant will not be humanly attractive. Look at v2: <sup>2</sup>[For] He grew up before him like a tender [young, sapling, delicate] shoot [branch, plant], and like a root [shout, tree trunk] out of dry [parched, arid] ground [earth, place]. He had no beauty [form, stately form, stately bearing, grace of form, charm] or majesty [comeliness] to attract us to him [that we should look at him, to give us pleasure, catch our attention], nothing in his appearance [no form when we see him, beauty, face] that we should desire [be attracted to] him.

Have you ever noticed how telegenic many religious teachers who succeed on TV are? These verses let us know that the Servant would look different than actors that turn up playing Jesus, or Superman in movies! The servant will be unexpected and unattractive. In that sense, Isaiah here is re-enforcing what he told us in the first stanza. But have you noticed how WE have kind of entered the story there in v2? He had no beauty or majesty to attract US to him, nothing in his appearance that WE should desire him? And in verse 3, it's even clearer that the servant will be despised. <sup>3</sup>He was [is] despised [spurned, made sport of, hated] and rejected [avoided, turning away from, shunned, passed over] by men, a man [full] of sorrows [suffering], and familiar [familiar with disease, has experience, acquainted, accustomed to, marked] with suffering [infirmities, grief, disease]. Like one from whom men hide their [we hid our, who hid his face from us] faces he was despised [spurned, looked down on], and we esteemed [valued, of no account] him not.

The song begins to implicate US in the guilt of not valuing God's servant, of considering him of no account. "He looked miserable to those who saw him, but he was glorious in the minds of those who knew him," (Isaiah, Ancient Chr Comm, p. 157).

I wonder if you think “I really have no opinion of Jesus. I’m not a Christian, but I have nothing against Jesus. Seems like a fine guy. I just am not particularly interested.” Jesus didn’t leave an “independent” category of response to him. As Jesus said “He who is not with me is against Me.” (Luke 11:23; Matt. 12:30).

As the song goes on, the identification of this servant with Jesus Christ becomes even more clear. Jesus Christ IS the despised servant. And friends, are we His disciples, surprised when WE are despised and rejected for being Christians—among family, or friends, or at work? How do we cultivate in our own souls, in our children’s hearts, this idea that our main responsibility is faithfulness not to someone else, not even to themselves, but to GOD? // *not to the CROWD,*

Praise God that He has revealed Himself to us and grown a desire in us for Him, when we had no such desire ourselves! Has He not been good to us, and kind?! He clearly picked us, for we would never have picked Him on our own. We didn’t esteem Jesus, we looked down on him and spurned Him! How many times have I had non-Christian friends tell me that perhaps they could believe, if only they could’ve known Jesus, but we find that this prophecy was fulfilled. We read the NT and we see that Jesus was despised, people avoided him, and hid their faces from him. They passed him by and turned away from him. And—if we know the truth about ourselves—we know that THIS has been OUR response as well.

Friends, this is why as a congregation, we’re not going to add worldly attractions to try to make THIS Gospel seem attractive. We want to be honest about ourselves and our own sins, and part of the message we’ve been called to bring is to call us all to honestly confess our sins. And you can hardly engage in a call to confession, and flattery at the same time.

**This prophecy has come true. WE have despised this Servant.**

It is in this song’s 3<sup>rd</sup> stanza that we find perhaps the <sup>*longest meditation*</sup> ~~clear~~ statement in the whole Bible about how God deals with our sins. And we find that here the images used don’t have to do with money or slavery or honor, or even love. We find that God’s Spirit inspired the language of a deserved penalty to be paid, and that someone paid it for us //

Some have suggested that Christ took up our infirmities in the sense that He was incarnate and joined us in our sufferings. But to join us is not the same thing as to help us, let alone to heal us and bring forgiveness for our sins and peace with God. ~~and~~ for one to suffer who deserves to suffer is unadorned justice, but it brings no redemption //

One of the earliest post-NT Christian expressions of Christ’s atonement comes from Clement of Rome. He said, “Because of the love he had for us, Jesus Christ, our Lord, in accordance with God’s will, gave his blood for us, and his flesh for our flesh, and his life for our lives,” (*The Letter of the Romans to the Corinthians* 49, in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* [ed., Michael W. Holmes; Baker, 1999] p. 85). And that’s what we see in this central, and climactic, stanza of this servant song. In the first stanza, we’ve seen the servant. In the second, we’ve begun to see ourselves in the servant’s afflictions. And now, in the third, we have the most surprising turn of all. In these verses is the answer to the riddle of the OT—how a holy God can forgive sinners. How mercy and justice can meet. How a righteous God could justify the ungodly. //

Look through this whole song, and see the words that describe the servant and his life. [*... look through and simply read those words . . .*] Why such anguish?

### III. God laid our sins on the Servant. 53:4-6

We see clearly here that the servant bore our infirmities. **53:4: 'Surely he took up [borne, bore] our infirmities [griefs, pain, sickness] and carried [endured] our sorrows [sufferings, diseases, disfigurements, punished], yet we considered [judged, esteem, thought of] him stricken [plagued, diseased] by God, smitten [punished] by him, and afflicted [humbled].**

What an amazing statement! Note that God struck and smote him. And Isaiah says that "we" would notice that, WE would consider him stricken BY GOD, smitten BY HIM. >>**But it wasn't because He deserved it.**<<

You see in v3 we see that he was a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.

Yes, and God did this, we see in v 4, but not because HE deserved it, but because WE have! And though some verbs here are passive—showing what God did—others are active, showing that the Servant Himself has acted to take up our suffering and to carry our sorrows. He may in some sense be a victim. But He is no mere victim. This was His action. As we'll see down in v12, he poured out his life, he bore the sin of many. Do you see this amazing combination? God's will and the Servant's willingness. This is no cosmic child abuse of a heavenly Father gone terribly wrong abusing His trembling child, who shrinks back from His strokes. This is the Eternal Triune God—Father, Son & Holy Spirit—determining from Eternity past how He would deal with our sins.—and DOING it!

And what we see here in v5 is the climax of the song—The servant's suffering brought us salvation. **But he was pierced [wounded] for our transgressions [offences, sins], he was crushed [broken, bruised] for our iniquities [sins, evil-doings]; the punishment [chastisement, chastening] that brought [for, makes] us peace [well-being, whole] was [fell, he took] upon him, and by his wounds [stripes, scourging, bruises] we are healed [made well].**

What a picture! Those words *pierced* and *crushed* indicate a violent death. So the LORD prophesied in Genesis that the offspring of the woman would crush the serpent. And here, we see that the Servant, Jesus, would be crushed, so that by his death he might destroy death (*Heb. 2:14*).

And why would we need to be so delivered? Because of our sins. As we read here in v6, we have sinned **and yet God laid our sins on the servant.** 53:6: **'We all, like sheep, have gone astray [went wandering], each of us has turned to his own way [desire]; and the LORD has laid [caused to fall, visited] on him the iniquity [guilt, punishment] of us all.**

The Israelites had been taught for hundreds of years, since the time of Moses, on their two great national holidays about God's holiness, their sin, and their need for a God-appointed substitute—at Passover, and on the Day of Atonement. Now, however, they see that that substitute is the servant, a God-appointed *person*. This is what people had not been told and had not before heard. The servant is substituted for the sheep. The servant is slaughtered so that the sheep are saved. //

My friend, if you're not a Christian I have 2 challenges for you.

1) You have sinned, and you are responsible before God for every sin you ever have or will commit.

2) Someone else has suffered for your sins, has paid the penalty for them, if you will only trust the claims of Jesus Christ to have done this, and turn from your sins to follow Him. **[GOSPEL] Friend**, God's answer for your guilt is not to explain it away by the circumstances that have victimized you, but to call you to own it fully, and to entrust them ALL to Jesus Christ by faith. Jesus Christ is our substitute. He has taken our penalty.

My brothers and sisters, you realize that all your disobedience is not ultimately disobedience to some other person, to yourself, but to God!? YOUR sins will never be taken care of any other way—not by success in your marriage or family, your friendships or your work. Christ alone is the way God has appointed to bear our sin. He died for us. What was it Luther said? "We all walk around with His nails in our pockets." It was our sins that put Him there. Consider what God did here! **REMIND YOURSELF** of His sovereignty in all of this. And return to the cross daily—Meditate on this passage. Consider what the Son of God has endured on your behalf.

**These verses are what our church is all about!! WE are a community of sinners, all of whom God has forgiven through This Servant, His Son Jesus Christ.**

Let's go on now to the 4<sup>th</sup> stanza of this most amazing song. And in this stanza, we see emphasized the Servant's own cooperation in this work.

#### **IV. The Servant accepted His substitutionary death. 53:7-9**

We see in v7 that though the servant was oppressed he did not cry out. 53:7: *'He was oppressed [harshly treated, cruel, maltreated, painfully abused] and afflicted [humbled, submitted, submissive], yet he did not open his mouth [quiet]; he was led [brought] like a lamb to the slaughter [death], and as a sheep [ewe] before her shearers [those who take its wool] is silent [dumb, makes no sound], so he did not open his mouth.*

Consider the Servant's humble acceptance of His role. He was quiet. He allowed Himself to be brought like a lamb to death. Can't you just see Jesus in Pilate's hall? Remember Him in the garden a little before telling His disciple to put away His sword. He was like a sheep being shorn. He chose not to open His mouth to dispute, to denounce, to prevent. Jesus Christ accepted this because it was God's plan.

The speaker here would either be Isaiah prophetically describing the servant's oppression, or it would again be the LORD Himself. Either way, we see here in v8 that the servant was killed because of the sins of the people. 53:8: *'By oppression and judgment [condemned] he [they] was taken [led] away [out from prison]. And who can speak of [declare, describe] his descendants [age, generation, destiny, fate, abode]? For he was cut off from [out of] the land of the living; for the transgression [sin] of my people he was stricken [plagued, to whom the stroke was due, killed, who deserved the punishment, wounded].*

In God's amazing providence (recorded in Acts 8) it was these very verses that the Ethiopian official was reading as he was returning from Jerusalem to Ethiopia. And he asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself, or someone else?" Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus," (Acts 8:34-35).

And then, back in Isaiah 53, verse 9, we see yet another prophesy which was fulfilled in Jesus' life and death. Though without sin himself, the servant died and

was buried. Look at v9: *<sup>9</sup>He [They] was assigned [made] a [his] grave with the wicked [sinners], and [yet] with the rich [evildoers] in his death, though [because] he had done no violence [wickedness, injustice], nor was any deceit [falsehood] in his mouth.*

His death could be regarded ambiguously—died with criminals, buried with wealthy, but as we find out more about the life and death of the Servant, verse 9 makes it very clear that this servant *had done no violence*. That is, His suffering was not caused by His own sin. He had no wickedness, no injustice to account for Himself. As it says down in v11, He was *righteous*. He was different from what we've all confessed about ourselves in v6.

And if you remember the accounts of Jesus' trial, even Pilate himself testifies to Jesus' innocence. It was as if he had read this prophecy in Isaiah and was following the script! As Peter wrote in I Peter 2:22, "*He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.*" And yet, Jesus Christ, our Passover Lamb, was slain for our salvation.

Some have thought that Jesus' example of non-resistance here should be a model for Christians to never resist injustice themselves, but I think this is a misreading of the importance of the text here. Jesus is certainly an example for us. But He was also undertaking the unique work of our salvation. There are many callings in life in which we have and should exercise authority, even to correct or even punish. We know this in our homes, and we know this in our jobs. But, if this does not teach that we should always practice non-resistance it DOES teach us that we should always be humble. If we oppose our own abuse, it is out of a humble trust in God's plan that this is against His will, and that we would love Him, even in the way we love those made in His image and oppose abuse and injustice.

My brothers and sisters, don't retaliate for wrongs done against yourself. Yes, if you can prevent them, prevent them. But follow the example of Christ here. If this Righteous One will be so humble, surely we should be even more humble! We must constantly remind ourselves of God's mercy to US, and out of that mercy we've been shown, deal with those who have sinned against someone so much lower than God—us!—so much less than we ourselves have sinned against God! If we have been shown mercy, how can we not, in turn, show mercy to others? Pray that there would grow and flourish in this congregation a God-honoring culture of forgiveness and non-retaliation.

**Because we want our lives to reflect the humility of this servant who accepted His special substitutionary suffering out of His love for us, and for His own glory.**

The last stanza still has one surprise left for us (though it was indicated in the very first verse of our passage):

#### **V. The Servant will be satisfied. 53:10-12**

We find in this last stanza of the song that it was the Lord's will to crush the servant, and yet cause Him to prosper. We see this in verse 10: *<sup>10</sup>Yet it was the LORD's will [pleasure] to crush [break, bruise] him and cause [make] him to suffer [subject to infirmities, grief, by disease], and though [when] the LORD [You, he] makes his life [soul, self] a guilt [sin] offering, he will see his offspring [seed] and prolong [have long] his days [life], and the will [pleasure, good pleasure] of the LORD will prosper in his hand.*

This *guilt offering* was the only OT sacrificial suffering which was intended to atone for sin (*cf. Lev. 5:16, 18; 7:7*). The Servant's death is presented as such an atoning



sacrifice. And that sacrifice is how we as Christians understand Jesus' death. And, in fact, many of the passages we hope to study in the New Testament in this series will explain this even more fully (cf. *John 1:29, 36; Rom. 3:25; 8:3; Heb. 9:26; 10:1-18; I John 2:2; 4:10*).

The suffering servant will justify many and be satisfied. Look at v11: "After [As a result of, Out of, Because of] **the suffering** [travail, anguish, affliction] **of his soul, he will see the light of life** [fruit, it, in fullness of days] **and be satisfied** [enjoy it]; by his knowledge my [the] **righteous** [one] [my] **servant will justify** [make accounted righteous, acquit] **many, and** [for] **he will bear their iniquities** [punishment].

The Servant's **knowledge** referred to here is His wisdom, shown not only in his own relationship with God, but in His leading others to have such a relationship. As Paul writes to the Romans (5:19): "For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous." //

We noted in v11 that the Servant's death was a guilt offering, but it was a new kind of guilt offering, because this Servant will both be wholly consumed (as guilt offerings were) **and yet** will be satisfied AFTER His suffering!! How could that be?// Remember back in 52:13: **he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.**

The last verse summarizes the song, concluding that because the servant bore the sin of many, God would reward Him. Look at 53:12: "Therefore I will give [divide, allot] **him a portion** [heritage] **among the great** [many], **and he will divide the spoils** [booty, goods of war] **with the strong** [mighty], **because he poured out** [surrendered, gave up] **his life** [soul, himself] **unto death, and was numbered** [counted] **with the transgressors** [wicked, evildoers, sinners, rebels]. For he bore [shall take away] **the sin of many** [the people], **and made intercession** [interceded, prayed, win pardon for] **for the transgressors** [their offenses, wrongdoers, sinners, rebels].

This servant would be an atoning penal substitute for the people whose sins he bore. And note the background of this. Just as we saw in Leviticus 16 last week, there is One who bore our sins. Those animals we considered last week, were signals and signs pointing forward to the One who would truly bear our sins, as Isaiah said here the Servant would do. John the Baptist recognized Jesus as this one. When he "saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'" (*John 1:29*). John the Baptist saw that here was coming the servant who would bear away our sins, and not just the sins of those in Israel, but in those from any nation in the world who would turn from his sins and trust this Lamb, instead of trying to account ourselves.

At the Last Supper, Jesus quoted this phrase here "numbered with the transgressors" and said "this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment, (Lk. 22:37)."

And part of what would be fulfilled was the prophecy that God would reward him. The Servant's life can be summarized as suffering, then glory. Back in terms of 52:13 "act wisely" then "highly exalted." Verse 11 uses the interesting language of being satisfied. It says "After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied." The Servant who has Suffered will come to know Joy. He will enjoy the many who have been justified, whose sins have been borne. Again, this key passage on penal substitution does not present the Servant as one abused by the Lord, but as one who

shares the will of the Lord—the Lord's will is His will, the Lord's plan is His plan, the Lord's joy is His joy.

My friend, if you're not a Christian, I just want to point out that all the good things that this prophecy say come to the Servant will only come *after he poured out his life unto death*. This chapter presumes the resurrection of the Servant! If you're considering Christianity, let me encourage you to look into the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Find more resources on the bookstall, or on our website, or feel free and talk to me at the door afterwards.

The wonderful news of this chapter is not only will we be forgiven, but Jesus Christ will be satisfied in it! He will have accomplished His end, His purpose in all His actions connected to it, His goal. He's not waiting to be satisfied based on what YOU do. Brothers & sisters, the glorious news is that He IS satisfied, based upon what HE has done! And we should follow His example in this. Our ultimate satisfaction should not be found in marriage or family, friends or work, but in God Himself. If you struggle with the thought of God loving you, consider the Savior's sacrifice of Himself. The cross is the pinnacle of God's love to us. What greater thing could He do?!

This is why for your own sake, and for the sake of this congregation you must labor to always be clear on believing and expressing and guarding this Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our satisfaction in our own congregation shouldn't come at improving facilities or growing budgets or larger congregations, but in Christ, in the Gospel, and in the hope of eternity with Him!

**This last stanza makes it clear that this Suffering Servant will be Satisfied! //**

### Conclusion

This wonderful passage is, as you can appreciate, especially controversial in the Jewish community. In the public reading through the Scriptures in many synagogues, this passage is left out. "It is too easily misunderstood," it is suggested. It has simply too often and for too long led people to think that Isaiah prophesied the coming of Jesus Christ to die as substitute, bearing the penalty for the sins of many. ~~And I think there's a reason for that.~~

This is what Christians have always understood. <sup>because Jesus taught us to.</sup> It is an idea that is both ancient and modern. Words from antiquity sound like the meditations of the Christian's heart just this morning. Here's what one early Christian said: "O, the surpassing kindness and love of God! He did not hate us, or reject us, or bear a grudge against us. Instead, he was patient and forbearing; in his mercy he took upon himself our sins. He himself gave up his own Son as a ransom for us—the holy one for the lawless, the guiltless for the guilty, 'the just for the unjust' (I Peter 3:18), the incorruptible for the corruptible, the immortal for the mortal. For what else but his righteousness could have covered our sins? In whom was it possible for us, the lawless and ungodly, to be justified, except in the Son of God alone? O the sweet exchange! O the incomprehensible work of God! O the unexpected blessings, that the sinfulness of many should be hidden in one righteous man, while the righteousness of one should justify many sinners!" (Letter to Diognetus, 9, [Apostolic Fathers, p.547]). /

All throughout this study, I've called this passage a "song". That's what the commentators call it. There is one more passage that most commentators say is the last of the servant songs in Isaiah. It's found in Isaiah 61 (Isaiah 61:1-2a): "The Spirit of the

*Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor.* This is the servant speaking again, the One who would be satisfied in the salvation He brings.

In 61:3 he tells us that those whom he saves "will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of His splendor." // *SLOWLY*

*SLOWLY* // Now friends, with all this in mind about the servant songs, consider this. When Jesus began His earthly ministry, "He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: 'The Spirit of the LORD is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.' Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing,'" (Luke 4:16-19). Think of everything that went through His mind when He said that. He knew what it meant. He knew the life of the Servant. Did He swallow hard? Was it a preview of the Garden of Gethsemane, a kind of "let it begin."

*SLOWLY* !

And, if you will turn from your sins and trust in Him, He did it all, all that He did in this for you. //

Let's pray.

He is FULL OF PITY, LOVE AND POWER, isn't He? We'll sing Hymn 323. And we'll sing the last stanza acapella. Let's stand as we sing

Hymn after the sermon 323 Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy"