



Sermon Growth Guide

January 1, 2023

The Great Rescue - The Sacrifice

Isaiah 53:1-11

Key Verse: Isaiah 53:6 “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Big Idea: Jesus laid down His life as a sacrifice for our sins that we might be reconciled to God for eternal life.

Foundations

We've been studying Isaiah in *The Great Rescue* series over the last several weeks. And we've seen the Jewish people in real trouble.

Israel's rebellion, the people's idolatry and injustice has led to a point of divine judgment. Because of their sin, the enemy neighbors of Assyria and Babylon are going to invade and conquer Israel. The Israelites will be killed and pulled into exile.

But, Isaiah also sees a promise of hope on the horizon. God is going to establish a New Jerusalem that is marked by justice and peace for all nations. There will be a new king who will establish and rule this New Jerusalem, and Isaiah describes this king as a small shoot, a new growth out of the dead rotting stump that was once Israel.

But who is Israel to expect? Who are they looking for? How will they recognize the great deliverer, the great rescuer, the king?

Our passage today offers a glimpse of this coming king who fulfills God's promise and brings about the New Jerusalem, but it's a jarring description. Not what anyone would expect. And, in this passage, we must come to grips with the cause for the king's assignment. It is not just the brokenness of a nation, but it is because of our own sin.

Understanding God's Word

Together, read Isaiah 53:1-11. What strikes you about the description of the Suffering Servant King in verses 1-3? Why do you think it's noted that he isn't "attractive"?

Have you ever had someone step in to carry a burden on your behalf? Have you ever put yourself out for someone? What were those experiences like?

Verse 9 seems to link the wicked and the rich. Do you see an inherent relationship between those two groups?

Applying God's Word

What does this passage require of you? There isn't a clear call-to-action but what might you do with this passage?

This passage is all about Jesus. Jesus has born our sin and suffering and has justified many. How might this passage influence the way you think about frustrating co-workers, difficult family members, awkward neighbors, etc.?

Witnessing God's Word

This passage is dripping with good news! Because of our outright rebellion against God, because of the brokenness in your heart and life, the Lord has given Himself to make a way for us to be restored, refreshed, redeemed, renewed!

Close your time by praying for specific people with whom you can share this news. Pray for God to create a moment to invite them to the upcoming Alpha course!

OK! It's that time of year...who's made a resolution or set a goal for 2023!? Has anyone already broken or abandoned the resolution they set for themselves? You're not alone. I was going to eat less sugar... but then there was this Trader Joe's candy bar left out on the counter that we didn't finish last night, and I decided to start my day with that. This week, I kept seeing quotes and other things about New Year's resolutions:

"A New Year's resolution is something that goes in one year and out the other." – Unknown
Toast – "May all your troubles last as long as your New Year's resolutions!" - Joey Adams
Prayer – "Dear God, my prayer for this New Year is a fat bank account and a thin body. Please don't mix these up like you did this year." – Author Unknown

Here's a question, why do we make resolutions? It's because we wish things were different! We make "resolutions," we set goals, because wish we were nicer/stronger/thinner/more focused or driven/in a different job/had our finances under control/more generous/etc. We make resolutions and set goals because we aren't living quite as we'd like to live. Things aren't quite how we want them. We want things to be better. And yet, most resolutions are abandoned within a few days, right!? Even when we want to force ourselves to change and be different, we just can't!

The Apostle Paul put it this way: "For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing" (Romans 7:18-19). This is more than just a strange tongue twister. Paul is saying that there's something inside him and really in each one of us which pulls us towards base-level appetites/desires instead of what we really know to be right and good for ourselves, for others, for the world. There's something in us that has caused us to depart, on a cosmic scale, from our created intent, from our creator's operating instructions and has led to a brokenness that leaves us longing for something different.

Our Sanctuary Worship Lead, Jamal Sarikoki, showed up to a worship meeting a few weeks ago with this amazing Christmas shirt..."You are all on the naughty list..." That's 16th century pastor/theologian John Calvin dressed as Santa, judging all of humanity to be broken, sinful, totally depraved, naughty. You know, at times, our culture has held an extreme optimism about humanity. If we could just ensure there was good enough housing and good enough education for people, our inherent good nature would lead to a utopian society. However, the last 120 years have shown that even when situations

are improved significantly in welfare states, we are still sinful people. From the atrocities of war to anonymous Twitter accounts that spew racist, sexist, vile garbage and then turn out to be operated by so-called Christian leaders. We are a mess.

We are consumed with selfishness and pride. We treat our families worse than acquaintances. We act for our own benefit at the expense of others. We take out our anger on others. We scar and murder one another with our words and thoughts. We can't settle our own disputes, we can't trust one another, we need protecting from each other! We are infected with a "sin-disease" that we can't cure ourselves of. It affects each of us and it affects each part of us. And it gets worse. Because of our sin, we are separated from a good and loving God. A good and loving father. And we cannot be restored to full relationship and right-standing with God and really even with others until our sin is dealt with. Our sin is rebellion/mutiny against our creator. And the ultimate outcome of sin is death. Blood must be shed for things to be set right!

So friends, what can we do to make amends? How can we make it up to God? Well, there must be some kind of payment, some kind of satisfaction that compensates for our wrongdoings. But who can make that payment? Who can pay that price? There is no way for us to satisfy the payment needed to set things right. It's been said that us trying to compensate for our sin would be like trying to climb a ladder to the moon, or trying to swim from Los Angeles to Honolulu. It's just not possible! We are drowning in debt with no cash reserves. There's nothing we can give or do to set things right ourselves!

We've been studying Isaiah together over the last several weeks. And we've seen the Jewish people in this same situation, but lived out on a national scale. Israel's rebellion, their idolatry, their injustice, has led to a point of divine judgment. Because of their sin, their enemies—Assyria and Babylon—are going to invade and conquer Israel. The Israelites will be slaughtered or taken into exile. This is **The Peril** Pastor Michael spoke about right after Thanksgiving.

But we've learned that Isaiah also sees a promise of hope on the horizon. God is going to establish a New Jerusalem that is marked by justice and peace for all nations. Isaiah foresees the coming of a new king who will establish and rule this New Jerusalem. Isaiah describes this king as a small shoot, a new growth out of the dead rotting stump that was once Israel. That's **The Plant** that Pastor Tim has been talking about.

In our passage today, we get a glimpse of this

coming king who will fulfill God's promise and bring about the New Jerusalem... but it seems VERY strange: "Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem" (Isaiah 53:1-3).

The opening of this chapter asks the question, "Who has heard and believed the good news?" Frankly, it's almost unbelievable. For a people in exile, this isn't a triumphant Savior. Who is this one with "no beauty or majesty to make him attractive." Not only was He seemingly unremarkable, He was "despised and rejected!" People looked down on Him (if they paid him any attention at all)! Is this who Israel is supposed to be looking for? Is this the hero that's coming to set things right? Is this the Great Deliverer? The Great Rescuer? It doesn't make any sense!

Isaiah goes on to describe how the hero king will restore Israel and establish His Kingdom: "Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:4-6). Who is this king and what has He done? Is He a good teacher? Is that what we see here? Does His philosophy offer a way to the good life? No mention of that...Maybe He models for us how to be ethical or moral? Not in this passage.

There's an account from the Nazi death-camp Auschwitz during WWII. In late July of 1941, a prisoner escaped from Barracks 14. As a consequence, the Nazi guards announced that 10 men would die in his place in the starvation bunker (a horrifying way to die), and the next time someone attempted escape it would be 20. The guards began selecting men for this torture. One of the men selected, Franciszek Gajowniczek, cried out upon selection, "My poor wife and children! What will they do!?" As the guards began to lead the men away, a prisoner stepped forward and addressed the head guard saying, "Please, I'd like to die in place of one of the men you condemned. I am an old man, I have no family, I want to die instead of him." Amazingly, the guard permitted him to step in for Gajowniczek. The prisoner's name was Maximillian Kolbe. He was

a Polish priest. Now, the starvation bunker was a nightmare, and typically screams of anguish were heard there as prisoners slowly lost their minds in their hunger. But the reports from Auschwitz in August of 1941 indicate that Maximillian Kolbe led the prisoners in prayer and hymns, that the bunker sounded like a church instead of a torture chamber. Finally, the bunker was needed for other prisoners, so on August 14, 1941, Kolbe was given a lethal dose of carbolic acid. Gajowniczek ultimately survived the horrors of the Nazis, and WWII. He lived to be 94 years old and spent his life telling people about the incredible sacrifice of Maximillian Kolbe.

Kolbe gave up his life for another man. And, in an infinitely greater way, this is what this Suffering Servant King of Isaiah 53 does. And somehow, His death changes things.

In the book of Leviticus, God makes a way for the people to "set things right" to be restored when they sinned. This is called "Atonement" ("At-One-Ment"). Now, this is very strange to us, but God meets the people where they are and sanctions animal sacrifice to be part of this process. Somehow, God makes allowance, that the life and blood of the animal could compensate for the evils perpetrated by a person. Through a sacrifice, the people could be forgiven and restored to right-relationship with God. But the sacrifice was limited in its effectiveness. It only covered that sin. I mean, how could the life of a dove or lamb entirely take the place of a human?

Here, in Isaiah 53, we see something different. The Suffering Servant King takes on the sin of ALL the people. I've seen it described like this (holding a book in one hand): "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). Sin weighing hand... flip to other hand... iniquity/sin/guilt laid on the king. Friends, it should be clear by now who the Suffering Servant King is.

In the Gospel of Mark Jesus says: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). The Apostle Peter wrote: "[Christ] himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls (1 Peter 2:24-25).

The Suffering Servant King of Isaiah 53 is Jesus. And this is our January 1 Good Friday service.

We asked earlier: who can pay the price required to

absolve/wipe-away/clear us of the charges of our sin? Who is both able and compelled/obligated? It's Jesus, the GodMan. God made flesh. Jesus who came to live and die in our place. Jesus who stepped in to take what we deserved. You see, we are the ones deserving death for our mutiny against God, but Christ is crucified in our place.

This is critical, He physically stepped in, physically substituted Himself in our place! He didn't just come with big ideas. He didn't just come with a new philosophy, with a new pattern for living, He actually gave His life in our place.

Through His body broken and His blood shed on our behalf, we are forgiven. We have life everlasting.

The rest of chapter 53 describes how "He was led like a sacrificial lamb to the slaughter... cut off from the land of the living..." and "the Lord makes his life an offering for sin..." The sins of all of us are laid on Him, and He is killed. We also read in verse 10 that "it was the Lord's will to crush him..." What's this about? Would God really desire this? It seems if God can save humanity in this way, then yes. Scholar John Oswalt wrote concerning this passage: "God wants human beings to be able to offer this man up on the altar of their sins so he can be a full and sufficient sacrifice for them, satisfying all of the unpaid debts of their behavior, debts they could never hope to pay, but debts that if left unpaid would stand forever between them and a just God."

The Lord desires relationship with you, with us, and has demonstrated a willingness to endure anything and everything to make that possible.

Friends, we're still in the liturgical/church calendar season of Christmastide. These are the 12 Days of Christmas. That's why this morning I gave my wife Eight Maids a Milking. Not sure where they're going to sleep or do their work, but we've got two growing boys and I felt it was a good investment given market trends/inflation. Big help in the long run...

We're still celebrating the incarnation, the good news that God came in flesh, that God "moved into the neighborhood." But we also know that Christ was born to ultimately fulfill this purpose. Yes, Jesus taught. Yes, Jesus proclaimed the coming Kingdom. Yes, Jesus healed. But, all of this was leading to the cross. Leading to a moment foretold hundreds of years before His birth in Isaiah 53. He came to live, and to die for you, and for me. In Christ, we are forgiven. Things can be right between us and God once again.

Verse 11 of our passage says, "After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,

and he will bear their iniquities." There's likely a footnote in your Bible that indicates that the phrase "by his knowledge" can also be read, "By the knowledge of him." Friends, "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."

"All who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved."

When we turn our lives over to Jesus, when we put our faith, our trust, our hope, in Him, we are restored/forgiven/made right and we have life. So, what do we need to do?

1) Maybe today... Rededicate yourself to the Lord as we look to the new year.

We're all prone to wander from the Lord each and every day. I was recently reminded of this great quote attributed to Martin Luther. There are more colorful translations, but for our audience today it's essentially this: "I thought that the old Adam drowned in the waters of baptism, but I've discovered the miserable wretch could swim." We die to self daily/surrender daily. Maybe this is a moment for you to return to the Lord.

2) Maybe today... You just need to share this news with someone!

This is good news! The best news! Because of your outright rebellion against God, because of the brokenness in your heart and life, the Lord has given Himself to make a way for us to be restored, refreshed, redeemed, renewed! So, tell someone! Tell a friend or family member! Invite someone to the Alpha course that starts next week to discuss and consider faith in Jesus!

3) Or maybe today... for the very first time, you need to repent of your sin and believe... to surrender to the Lord.

This is a new day, a new year. You can start it in the knowledge of the suffering servant who has died for you to bring you into relationship with the Father who loves you. Start it by handing over your life to Jesus. Start this year by acknowledging your need for a savior, and calling on His name.

We're going to take a moment to pray together before we go to the table. This could be the moment you give God the keys to your life and start anew. Let's pray together: *Father God, I acknowledge my brokenness and my sin before you. I see that I cannot fix myself, but that I need you. Forgive me and come into my life. Take control of my heart and enable me to walk with you each day. Draw me close and fill me with your Holy Spirit. Amen.*