

INTRODUCTION

Open your Bibles to Isaiah 53:3-6. As I announced, this message is what I would preach if I only had one more sermon to preach. My wife was asking me if my life insurance is up to date. I really don't know what you're going to think this is worth. I told this story several years ago but the good thing about being somewhere in ten years is that stories like this only have about a seven-year shelf life. Some of you with good memories will remember it but when we went to our first church out of Seminary, in a little Central Alabama town called Tallassee, we were moving into the pastorium and some church members had brought by some food to welcome us. We took a break from unloading the U-Haul truck and I was going to get bread to make sandwiches with the ham someone brought. So I went to a little combination gas station/grocery store on Alabama Highway 14 called Gray's Grocery Store. I went in and I got a loaf of bread, put it on the counter. It was so long ago that bread was about 50 cents. As I reached for my wallet, I realized I had changed pants and I didn't have my wallet. Preachers can talk their way out of anything, so I figured I could talk my way out of it. So I introduced myself to Mrs. Gray and I said, "I'm David Dykes. I'm the new pastor of the church down the road. I need to buy some bread and I didn't bring my wallet. If you'll just let me, I *promise* you I'll bring the money back tomorrow." She was so sweet. She introduced herself and said, "I'll tell you what, pastor. This bread's worth 50 cents, I'll just come hear you preach and I figure we'll be even." I was fresh out of Seminary so I was a little insulted by that and I said, "Ma'am, the only problem with that is I don't have any 50 cent sermons." She said, "Okay, I'll come hear you twice."

Or you may be like the little lady in Alabama who left church one Sunday who looked at me and honestly said, "Oh, Brother David, every sermon you preach is better than the next one."

Whether or not you know it, I prepare every message as if it is the last message I'll ever preach. The great preacher Phillips Brooks said that a preacher is a dying man preaching to dying people. So tonight, if I knew the Lord was going to say, "I'm going to take you home," or the Rapture was going to occur, and I only had one more shot at it, this would be the text and message I would preach on. It would be a message about Jesus. It would be a message about salvation. It would be a message about the sacrifice and the suffering of Jesus.

Here in Isaiah 53, I believe we have some of the most beautiful words ever penned under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. These words were written 750 before Jesus was ever born in Bethlehem but it reads as if Isaiah was standing at the foot of the cross when Jesus was crucified. There are some liberal theologians who claim this is not about Jesus, they don't believe in prophecy but may I say I think they are wrong. I think this is all about Jesus, because Jesus himself said this was about him. During His ministry, he was talking to his disciples and in Luke 22:37, he says, "It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment." In other words, Jesus said, "This is all about me."

As we look at these words tonight, I want to talk to you about "Hallelujah! What a Savior!" As we look through this text, I want to say four things from this passage. We will read each verse as we come to that section. The first thing I want us to notice about Jesus is

1. HIS SORROW

(verses 3-4) "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised and we esteemed him not.

Surely he took our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted."

This passage tells us that when the Messiah comes, he's going to be a man of sorrows. As we go through the gospel accounts of Jesus, that's what we see about him. We see he often wept out of empathy because other people were weeping. At the tomb of Lazarus, as Lazarus had been dead for four days, when he saw Mary and Martha weeping, the Bible says Jesus wept. I believe the Bible when it says when Jesus sees your broken heart and your tears, his heart is moved as well. His empathy causes him to be a man of sorrows. I think also his rejection caused him to be a man of sorrows because Jesus came into His own and his own received him not. Jesus came first of all the nation of Israel to bring truth and peace to its children. And you know Israel said? "We don't want you. We reject you." That's why we read in the gospel according to Luke that as Jesus was walking over the Mount of Olives, stood looking at the city of Jerusalem, the Bible says he wept.

The word for weep in John 11 when he wept at the tomb of Lazarus is a word meaning he quietly cried and a tear trickled down his cheek. But in Luke when he was weeping over Jerusalem, it's a strong word meaning his body was racked with sobs. He cried out as he looked at the city. He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem. If you had only known the time of your visitation," meaning God has come to visit you. He said, "But now, it is hidden from your eyes." And Jesus wept because he was rejected.

As we're studying Luke on Sunday mornings, we notice the crowds are following Him and indeed they are. They're following him because he's performing miracles and feeding them. They just see Jesus as a meal wagon to follow around. "Hey, I won't have to work anymore! I'll just follow Jesus and I'll be fed, just like he did with the five loaves and two fish." But did you ever notice the closer Jesus got to the cross, how the crowd around Him grew smaller and smaller and smaller? We're going to see a large number of people quit following him when he starts talking about the cost of discipleship. We're going to see that even when he gathers his twelve most faithful men, one of them leaves. We're going to see when he goes to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray with the other eleven and he the soldiers come to arrest him, they *all* forsake him until he is all alone. It was the rejection that caused him to cry. He was a man of sorrows.

May I say to you tonight, if you're here without Jesus, and tonight as we present the good news of Jesus to you my friend, if you reject Jesus, I believe it causes Jesus' heart to break even tonight. I believe the Lord Jesus looks at you tonight and says, "O!" And he calls out your name. "O!" And he calls out your name. And he says, "If you had only known the time of your visitation. I'm here tonight to reveal myself to you. But it's hidden from your eyes." He was a man of sorrows.

I think there was something else that made him a man of sorrows. I think it was also the anticipation of the cross, because all of His life, the Lord Jesus knew he was facing a cruel, agonizing death on the cross. Many of you have seen the beautiful picture by Holman Hunt called "The Shadow of the Cross." It's a beautiful painting of Jesus as he is a 10- or 11-year-old boy working in the carpenter's shop there in Nazareth. It's late in the day and you can see the sun setting on the horizon and this young Jesus as he's just beginning to grow in stature, stretches out his arms and yawning at the end of the day and there cast on the wall from the shadow of the setting sun is a cross. All of his life, Jesus lived in the shadow of the cross.

You realize of course the Romans all throughout his lifetime crucified hundreds and even thousands of people. So there were many times Jesus would have seen someone carrying his cross to his execution. And I believe every time Jesus saw someone carrying his cross to be executed by the Romans, he was thinking, "That's me. That's where I'm headed." And he was so terrorized by the thought of that, the Bible says in the Garden of Gethsemane, he was under such strain and agony, that sweat drops of blood appeared on his forehead. The writer of Hebrews said with "strong crying he cried out to God." He was crying out to God as a man of sorrows. "Father, is there any way this cup can pass from me? But not my will but yours be done." He was a man of sorrows.

I love George Frideric Handel's "The Messiah." It is one of the most beautiful musical compositions ever created by human hands. I read once that Handel composed the entire Messiah in 23 days. It is a massive work. Most of us have only heard parts of it. For these 23 days, he hardly ate. People would bring food in to him and they'd come in hours later and the food wouldn't have even been touched. He was sitting at his piano composing as he was inspired by God. One of his friends dropped by one day and as Handel was putting those words we read in Isaiah 53:3 to music, his friend found George Frideric Handel seated at his piano weeping into his hands. "Surely, he has borne our grieves. Surely, he has carried our sorrows."

The Bible says Jesus was a man of sorrows but it also says he *carried* our sorrows. Do you know what that means? It means sickness, sorrow and sin are carried by the Lord Jesus Christ and we do not have to be people of sorrow. We do not have to be people who bear the punishment of sin, because, praise God, Jesus carried it for us. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

The next thing we see in this passage of scripture is not only his sorrow but also

2. HIS SUFFERING

Let's look at verse 5, "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." Do you know why so many of the people of Israel did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah? Because the word *messiah* means "conquering king." It means "reigning king." And the people of Israel were looking for a military Messiah. They were looking for a military king like David or Solomon. They could not imagine in their wildest dreams that the true Messiah would suffer, that a messiah would even die. It boggled their imaginations. They believed with all their hearts he would be a king who would lead them against the Romans. So when Jesus came along and he was the suffering servant, that's why they rejected him. That's why they

didn't recognize Him. But 750 years before it happened, God said, "Do you know how you're going to recognize the Messiah? He's going to suffer." Look at those words again in verse 5. "Pierced." I think of the nails, I think of the spear. "Crushed." I think of the cross he had to carry. I think of the scouring on his back. I think of the crown of thorns crushed upon his head. "Punishment." I think about how he was beaten and slapped and blindfolded and scoffed and made fun of. I think of the wounds in His side, the wounds in His head, the wounds in His hands and feet. Do you know why Jesus suffered? It's very simple. The Bible says Jesus suffered because of me and because of you, because we are sinners and we needed someone to pay the price for our sin. Look at the other words there in verse 5, "our transgressions," that's why he was pierced. "Our iniquities," that's why he was crushed. He had to be punished so we could have peace. He had to be wounded so we could be healed. We are the reason.

Never, ever forget Jesus not only suffered physically but he also suffered spiritually there on the cross.

C. Truett Davis, M.D. did a medical study on the physiological aspects of Roman crucifixion. He writes that the first point of Jesus' suffering occurred when the Roman soldiers began to scourge him. Where did you or I ever get the idea Jesus only received 39 lashes? Have you ever heard that? Sure. Well, the Jews said you could only whip someone 39 times; that was Jewish punishment. The reason they said 39 was because 40 was the limit. Just in case they miscounted, they stopped at 39. May I remind you Jesus was not beaten by Jewish police; he was beaten by cruel, sadistic Roman soldiers. They didn't stop at 39. They might not have stopped at 390. Dr. Davis says this is what happened when a prisoner was scourged:

The flagrum is a short whip consisting of several heavy, leather thongs with two small balls of lead attached near the ends of each. The heavy whip is brought down repeatedly with full force against the prisoner's shoulders, neck, back, and legs. At first the thongs, cut through the skin, then as the blows continue, they cut deeper into the subcutaneous tissue, producing a massive amount of bleeding from the vascular area surrounding the muscles. After only a few blows, the skin of his back would have been sliced open and hanging in long ribbons. The entire area would have been an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue. When it was determined by the Roman Centurion that the prisoner is near death, the beating would be stopped.

Did you know there are actual historical accounts of a prisoner being killed by the scourging? They didn't even make it to the cross; the scourging killed them. There were probably two Roman soldiers, one on either side, and they alternated bringing that whip down upon Jesus' back. The robe had been taken from his back; his arms were tied to a post so the muscles in his back, neck and legs were taut. Again and again and again they beat my Savior. There are some who say it is sad Jesus had to suffer and that He was such a martyr and things got out of control. That's what Dr. Albert Schweitzer said. Oh no, things were never out of control. He was in full control the entire time. In fact, do you remember in the garden as he was arrested, Peter pulled out his sword? Jesus said, "Put your sword away, Peter. Don't you know I could call down twelve legions of angels to rescue me right now?" I promise you friend, with the first blow upon his back, Jesus could have said, "Father, send the angelic army!" I happen to believe the angelic army was standing, leaning over the ramparts of heaven with their swords drawn saying, "Jesus,

call us. How *dare* those vile human creatures violate you!" But the Bible says like a lamb, he was silent. He didn't call for help. Why? Because of our iniquities, because of our transgressions, because of our sin he endured the suffering.

As I said earlier, crucifixion was not at all uncommon. It was developed in Carthage about 200 years before the Romans began to use it as a form of execution. The reason it was used as a form of execution because it was a long, slow, torturous death. Compared to crucifixion, beheading was merciful and quick. A prisoner was laid out upon a cross and long nails driven through the bones in the lower part of the hand. One foot was draped over the other and a nail driven through the other to fix the person upon the wooden cross. And the cross was lifted up and put in a hole in the ground. The worst thing about crucifixion was not necessarily the pain of those initial wounds, because that would soon pass.

The worst thing about crucifixion was the difficulty to breathe. If you don't believe it, sometime try to jump up and grab hold of a bar and hang as long as you can. You'll discover how hard it is to breathe stretched out like that with your muscles tight. So a person who was crucified died slowly, in agony, struggling to draw the very next breath.

Again, may I quote Dr. Davis, who writes about this. He says:

As the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability of the crucified individual to push himself upward. Hanging by his arms, the pectoral muscles are paralyzed and the intercostal muscles are unable to respond. Air can be drawn into the lungs, but cannot be exhaled. The prisoner finds it nearly impossible to even draw a short breath. As the loss of tissue fluids reaches a critical level, the compressed heart struggles to pump, heavy sluggish blood into the tissues. Death is imminent.

He was wounded for our transgressions. He was pierced for our iniquities. The punishment that should have been upon us brought our peace and by his wounds we are healed. My friend, never, ever, underestimate the treasure, the value of the wounds of Jesus.

In a beautiful prophetic passage in Zechariah 13, there is a conversation between the Father and the Son. The Father asks the question, "What are those wounds on your body?" The Son answers, "The wounds I was given at the house of my friends." As I've said before, the only man-made things in heaven are the wounds in the hands and the feet of Jesus—His suffering.

There is something else in this text I want us to look at. The writer turns from Jesus, the Messiah for a moment and speaks about us. Let's talk about

3. OUR STUBBORNNESS

The first part of verse 6 says, "We all like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way." In my opinion, that's the first mention of a Baptist church in all the word of God—everybody going their own way. What a contrast. What a comparison. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Isaiah is talking about the sorrow and the suffering of Jesus and suddenly he's

talking about us. He said, "In the midst of all this, here we are, doing our own thing, going our own way." Did you know all of us in our sinful nature; we all have a tendency to be stubborn and rebellious against God? I can't help it and you can't help it. We have a sinful human heart.

Have you ever heard the expression "stubborn as a mule"? We don't have many mules anymore. A couple of generations ago, Sam Jones, the Methodist evangelist, talked about the many who bought a new surrey carriage. He hitched it to an old mule and got in the carriage, cracked his whip and said, "Giddyup!" That old mule didn't move a foot. He just stood there. The man cracked his whip again and said, "Giddyup!" The mule still didn't move. The man got out, grabbed the mule by the bridle and pulled as hard as he could, trying to get the mule to move. The mule didn't budge. Finally, the man got so angry he gathered sticks and debris, piled it up under the mule's belly and set it on fire. Sure enough, the old mule moved—he moved forward eight feet and stopped with the brand new carriage right over the fire and it burned to ashes.

I must confess, there have been times in my life when the Lord had to light a fire under me to get me going in the right direction. Do you know why? Because I'm plain old stubborn. I want to do my own thing. I want to go my own way. The writer Isaiah says we all do our own thing, go our own way. I want to remind you of what the Bible says in Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." All of us have an idea of the right way to go. We think *our* way is the right way. The Bible says there's a way that seems right to a man, but the end of it is death and destruction.

I can remember several years ago, right here in Tyler, Texas, having a discussion with a man who still lives here. We were talking about salvation, discussing the Bible and Jesus. He wasn't a member of any church; had never publicly professed in faith in Jesus. As we talked about being saved, this is what he said to me, "Oh, I'm not saved *your* way. But I assure you I'm saved *my* way." Do you know what he meant by that? He meant, "I've got it all figured out. I've figured out what it means to be a Christian, what it really means to be acceptable to God and *in my own way* I have been saved." He was convinced he was. May I remind you the Bible says there is a way that *seems right* to a man, but in the end leads to destruction.

I remember reading a newspaper years ago of a tragic story about a cheerleader mother who was driving home from an out-of-town football game with a car full of cheerleaders, her daughter being one of them. They were driving along on a dark, rainy night on an unfamiliar highway. They came upon a construction area and someone, as a prank, had removed some of the warning signs. They drove right off the end of a bridge under repair. They plunged sixty feet into a ravine. The tragic thing about it was there were absolutely no skid marks on the bridge. Here they were, driving along. Can't you just hear them laughing, carrying on, having a good time? And then suddenly, they think they're on the right way; they think they're safely going toward home. Suddenly, there's a way that seems right to a person, but the end leads to death.

There's not my way to be saved and there's not your way to be saved—there's only *one* way to be saved that's Jesus. It's the *Jesus* way. In fact, he said, "I *am* the way." If you insist upon your own stubbornness, you're way will be to destruction. Or my way will lead to destruction, because the Bible says we've all turned our own way.

The final thing I want us to look at is

4. HIS SUBSTITUTION

I love that word. I happen to believe very strongly in a doctrine called "substitutionary atonement", which means it was Jesus Christ who took our place as a substitute. Look at the last part of verse 6. I'm serious when I say I believe these are the *twelve greatest words in the Bible*: "... and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." In other words, we *deserved* the punishment for sin. We deserve to suffer. We deserve sorrow. But God laid on Jesus the iniquity, the sins, the transgressions, the mistakes, the failures of *all* of us. Do you under the word *substitute*? When I used to play basketball, sometimes someone would come take my place when I was in the game. They were my substitute. When high-paid actors are filming a movie, if there is a scene that gets a little rough, the director stops the camera and brings in a stunt double to take the actor's place. They are the ones who have to go through all the rough stuff. They are the substitute for that person. One of the glorious truths of the Bible is this: Every one of us in this room deserves all the suffering Jesus endured on the cross. But He stepped in as my substitute and he stepped in as your substitute. He took our place. There is nothing more glorious than that in all the Bible.

One of my favorite songwriters is the gospel songwriter/singer Dottie Rambo. She wrote a song years ago that reminds me of II Corinthians 5:21 that says, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." She wrote a song that went like this:

I was guilty with nothing to say;
They were coming to take me away.
But then a voice from heaven was heard that said,
Let her go, take me instead.

A crown a thorns and a spear so deep in His side;
And all the pain, it should have been mine.
Those rusty nails were meant for me;
But God took them, and He let me go free;

And I should have been crucified;
I should have suffered and died.
I should have hung on that cross in disgrace;
But Jesus, God's Son took my place.

Did you know you had a substitute? Did you know if anyone deserved death and hell, it's me and it's you? Because the wages of sin is death.

Sometimes when I do Vacation Bible School, I'll tell the kids this story, because it's a story I heard when I was saved as a child. Frankly, I don't know if the story is true or not. It may be like one of the parables of Jesus that has a great lesson, a very short but simple and powerful story. Perhaps you've heard it. It's a story of an old one-room mountain schoolhouse, years ago, with

only one teacher. All the grades met together. They had been having a rash of robberies in that little one-room school. People's lunches were being stolen. They decided as a class if they found the person who was stealing lunches, the culprit would have to suffer twenty lashes on his bare back with a hickory stick. They were serious about stopping the crime.

One day one of the biggest boys, an eighth grader, went to the schoolmaster complaining his lunch was missing. They began to look around. They caught the culprit just as he was climbing out a window. He had the big boy's lunch in his hand. They brought him before the class. It was a young, scrawny boy who looked like he hadn't had a meal in a long time. But he was caught and punishment had to be dealt. So in front of the whole class, they took his ragged shirt off. He was so thin and emaciated, his arms looked like sticks and you could count every rib. The teacher hated to do it, but the punishment had to be dealt out. So he brought the stick down with a SLAP upon the little boy's back, thinking, "Nineteen more times?" But before he could bring it down the second time, he felt a hand on his wrist and a voice that said, "Wait a minute. Let me take the punishment for him." It was the big farm boy whose lunch had been stolen. He was the one whose property had been violated. Yet he said, "I am willing to take the punishment." He took off his shirt. He was a well-fed farm boy whose muscles were rippling. Nineteen more times the stick came down upon the back of the one who did not deserve the punishment, but the one who took it for the one who *did* deserve it.

Maybe that's too simple for you but that is *exactly* what Jesus did for us. We *violated* the holiness of God, every one of us. Yet Jesus said, "Father, I'll take his place. I'll take her place." And he became our substitute. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

The good thing about preaching is you can sing any song you want. I want to finish by singing my very favorite hymn by Philip Bliss, "Man of Sorrows."

"Man of sorrows!" What a name
For the Son of God who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim!
Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude
In my place condemned He stood,
Seal'd my pardon with His blood;
Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Guilty, vile, and helpless we,
Spotless Lamb of God was He;
Full atonement! Can it be?
Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Lifted up was He to die,
"It is finished," was His cry;
Now in heav'n exalted high,
Hallelujah, what a Savior!

When He comes, our glorious King,
All His ransomed home to bring,
Then anew this song we'll sing,
Hallelujah, what a Savior!

OUTLINE

IS ISAIAH 53 ABOUT JESUS?

In Luke 22:37, Jesus said: "It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors' (quote of Isaiah 53:12) and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment."

1. HIS SORROW (v. 3-4)

"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hid their faces he was despised and we esteemed him not.

Surely he took our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted."

2. HIS SUFFERING (v. 5)

"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."

3. OUR STUBBORNNESS (v. 6a)

"We all like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way."

4. HIS SUBSTITUTION (V. 6b)

"... and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."