

Jesus Christ, the Suffering Servant of God

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Pastor Adam McMurray

The Arm of the Lord Revealed

In Isaiah 53 we come upon the crown jewel of Isaiah's theology and the focal point of his vision. It is in these verses that Isaiah finally reveals the answer to the great question for God's people...How can a Holy and just God who has promised salvation, forgiveness and restoration to humankind be reconciled and united with a people who are so sinful? The answer is found in the obedient work of the suffering Servant. Isaiah 53 brings together two major themes of the book that have been swelling up in Isaiah's vision. The first theme is that of the Servant of the Lord (Is. 42, 49, 50) who is set apart because of His obedience, humility, and commitment to a purpose that will ultimately result in His suffering and death. The second theme is that of the mighty "arm of the Lord" that will bring salvation to the ends of the earth (Is. 51:9, 52:10). When Isaiah asks in 53:1 "to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed" the implied answer is it will be revealed to those who see and understand that it is in fact the suffering Servant who is the means by which Israel is saved! It is through the work of the Servant that the nations may come home to God. *My righteous Servant will justify many, and He will bear their iniquities (53:11)*. It is through the work of the Servant that God's people are forgiven and restored. The Suffering Servant is the saving arm of the Lord revealed! The Suffering Servant is Jesus Christ our Savior. If we miss this, if we do not open our hearts and our eyes to the true identity and work of the Servant of God, we have missed everything that Isaiah (and the entire Bible) is pointing us towards!

The Arm of the Lord Dismissed

Isaiah calls the attention of his readers to what he is going to proclaim about the Servant in 52:13 with the command, "See, my Servant will act wisely" or, as another translation states it, "Behold, my Servant will accomplish His purpose". It is as if Isaiah is warning the people of Israel to take note, lest they miss, or even dismiss the importance of the Servant in God's plan. And dismiss it they do, for as Isaiah predicts, He will be despised and rejected by men. People will "hide their faces" from the Servant and esteem Him not. This prophecy rings true today in a popular culture in which Jesus Christ is nothing more than a wise teacher at best, or a fairy tale at worst, and the Cross of Christ is foolishness (1 Cor. 1:18). For many, the notion of a God who suffers in our place is so scandalous, ridiculous or barbaric that they write it off immediately, and fail to see that it is in fact the very thing that they need to be right with God.

So, what about you? Are you going to miss the significance of the Servant in your life today? Isaiah masterfully encourages us to behold

the wisdom and work of the Servant at a very deep and personal level. He encourages us to understand that it is our suffering and sorrow, our sin that has been placed upon the Servant. Isaiah encourages me to hear again today the message of the gospel, the message that says I need a Savior, I am sinful and my sin is very serious, for it resulted in the suffering of God's Servant. If you and I miss this, we will in turn "dismiss" the saving work that Jesus Christ offers us.

The Self-Substitution of God

"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" (53:5). It is in Isaiah 53 that the capacity of the suffering Servant to deliver His people comes into focus. The picture that Isaiah paints is that of a great exchange! His punishment for our peace. His suffering so that we can be healed. He is "cut off" so that we can be welcomed in. He is forsaken and crushed, we become righteous. It's the powerful message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus, the Lamb of God, comes to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). He suffers for us. He takes our place as a substitute. Isaiah 53 teaches us that the Servant suffers for His people, procuring for them through His suffering what they cannot procure for themselves...forgiveness and peace with God. Will you embrace this today in your heart? Will you humbly accept the work of Jesus Christ on the Cross in your place? Will you admit today the depth and severity of your sin and believe that Christ has taken that sin upon Himself so that you can be saved? It is the message of the Gospel and it is for you today!!

For Further Reflection:

This week, read Isaiah 52:13-53:12 every day. Spend time praying, listening, and writing. How is the Lord working in your life through Isaiah's vision of Jesus Christ, the Suffering Servant?

River West Happenings...

Today's the Last Day to Register for Jr. High Summer Camp

Camp dates are August 4th-8th. If you have any questions, give Pastor Josh a call at 699.2226 or josh@riverwest.com

Saturday August 16th • Saturday Morning Prayer

RW Fellowship Hall • 8-9am

All are invited to take a more active role in the heart of our church through prayer. For more information contact Jeff Nopper @ 245.1841 or Ryan Lee @ 235.9388

Saturday, August 16th • New Moms Social

River West Community Center 6:30-9pm

Calling all new moms! Come and enjoy a casual evening meeting other moms, enjoy a few goodies and have fun socializing. For more information contact Amy Palmer @ 656.9789

Saturday, August 23rd Who's Coming to BBQ 7-9pm

Sign ups start this week for this opportunity to meet other folks from our River West community at your home or theirs... fill out the postcard and drop it into a fishbowl! For more information contact Kent Nielsen @ 639.7897

Saturday August 23rd • River Day @ the Hamilton's 2-9pm

Student Ministries has another great River Day planned this year for Jr. High & High School Students. Enjoy a fun-filled day with boating, tubing, wake boarding, food, great music and lots of games - bring your friends! (Medical release form required) Pick up a flyer in the lobby or for more information contact Pastor Josh at 699.2226 or josh@riverwest.org