

Saturday October 3, 2026
The Singing Servant Series
Isaiah 52:13-53:12
@ NLBC Retreat

Suffering That Leads to Life

- On Sunday we talked a little bit about how when the book of Isaiah, and the prophets as a whole, were read by the first generation of people who were reading them, they were read primarily through the lens of what was going on in their immediate vicinity.
- They would read the scrolls of Isaiah and look around at the people around them and try to figure out who the prophet was talking about.
 - o “He was disfigured...”
 - Bob is kind of unsightly.
 - o “He was beaten...”
 - None of us really like Bob and sometimes we pick on him...I don’t know if I would say we *beat him*, but maybe that’s what Isaiah is talking about.
 - o “He was unjustly condemned...”
 - Bob has never really done anything wrong, but we treat him so badly simply because we don’t really like him...I am sure he feels unjustly condemned.
 - o “He was buried like a criminal...”
 - Bob is still alive...but I am sure he will die soon...
- Then we read the same part of the prophets and are pretty sure that the text isn’t talking about Bob.
- This evening we are looking at the fourth servant song...the suffering servant.
 - o This is a text that often is read on Good Friday and Easter.
 - o Sometimes it even shows up during Christmas.
 - o It is often the text that shows up when you are trying to learn something about Jesus from the OT.
 - Isaiah was known as the theologian of the OT.
 - o It is very much a Jesus-centered text...it is referenced numerous times throughout the gospels.

- I am going to read through the end of Isaiah 52 and Isaiah 53 slowly.
 - I want you to leave your Bibles aside and simply listen.
 - Some of you have notebooks and pens...awesome...if you don't, I have pens and paper for you.
 - As I slowly read through the text I want to invite you to note the images of Jesus that stand out to you.
 - Don't write everything down...the goal isn't to rewrite what Isaiah already wrote about the suffering servant, but to reflect on what stands out most to you.

READ Isaiah 52:13-53:12

- Let's pause for a moment, and read through the notes that you took.
- *God, reveal yourself to us in these moments.*

- Diving into this whole text in depth is going to take a long time...I don't think it is pertinent to go through every part of text on the Suffering Servant, but I want to highlight a few themes that are carried throughout.

- **LOOKS**
 - Scripture doesn't tell us much about what Jesus looks like.
 - Knowing that much of scripture takes place in the Middle East, leads me to deduce that Jesus was likely not super white the way most depictions of Jesus show.
 - And the fact that "there was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance" leads me to also believe that the serene drawings of Jesus are probably a little bit inaccurate too.
 - Sometimes you will see a person who stands out to you...
 - I did a wedding this summer and one of the attendees at said wedding stood out...big hair, bright clothing, big personality.
 - When I saw him a couple weeks later at Sophie's school, I recognized him right away.
 - At the same time, there are many people who just blend in.
 - They aren't loud and I know there are tons of people I have seen numerous times before, but I have just not noticed them.
 - It seems like Isaiah is painting that picture of Jesus...

- Throughout the NT, there are many times where Jesus, as popular as he is, just seems to blend into his surroundings and escape.
- The end of Isaiah 52 though addresses how Jesus is disfigured and hardly seemed human.
 - This is not a description of Jesus as he lived and taught and walked alongside his disciples.
 - This is the description of the suffering servant who carried his cross, who was betrayed, who had a crown of thorns pressed deeply into his skull, who was pierced and beaten.
 - Hopefully you have never seen someone in that state before, but if you have, you know that that person can look unhuman.
- This is the image of Jesus we begin with when we look at the suffering servant.

- **HURT**

- Much of this text about the suffering servant addresses deep hurt.
 - We don't read, "The suffering servant was loved and cared for...people enjoyed the company of the suffering servant...the suffering servant was the life of the party."
 - We read the opposite...
 - Despised
 - Rejected
 - Grief
 - Abandoned and avoided
 - Not cared for
 - Filled with the weight of sorrow
 - Pierced
 - Crushed
 - Beaten
 - Whipped
 - Burdened with sin
 - Oppressed
 - Treated harshly
 - Led like a lamb to the slaughter
 - Condemned
 - Led away
 - Life was cut short in midstream

- Struck down
- Buried like a criminal
- Counted among the rebels
- None of these descriptions sound pleasant do they...these are all of the types of things that we try our best to avoid.
 - It's so hard to understand the love of Jesus alongside the hurt that he endured.
 - Paul writes to the Romans, "Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good." (Romans 5:6, NLT)
 - Someone...Jesus was willing to not just die, but to be despised, rejected, beaten, oppressed, condemned, led like a lamb to the slaughter for a whole bunch of people...you and I...who are not even especially good in the grand scheme of things.
 - Death is almost easier than enduring hardship and disaster and pain that the suffering servant endured.

- **HURT LEADS TO LIFE**

- Jesus' life is the offering for sin.
- The Israelites that are reading the prophet Isaiah are well aware of the offering for sin.
 - They are aware of the sacrifices that needed to be made to make right what was wrong.
- Through all the endurance of pain and suffering, the righteous, suffering servant "makes it possible for many to be counted righteous." (Isaiah 53:11a, NLT)
 - On my own, I am coming nowhere near being considered righteous.
 - But Jesus, the suffering servant, the one who died and rose again says that I am righteous and you are righteous, not because of what you have done, but because the weight of your sin and my sin is carried by Jesus.
- Jesus, the suffering servant, extends the hand of abundant life to you and me, and really anyone else willing to accept that gift of abundant life.

- Jesus conquered sin and death so that we can live.
 - We are not living forever on this earth...death remains a very present reality.
 - But as we read in Isaiah 53:10, “Yet when his life is made an offering for sin,
he will have many descendants.
He will enjoy a long life,
and the Lord’s good plan will prosper in his hands...”
 - We join Jesus in a long life getting to see the Lord’s good plan lived out.
 - And after our life on this earth is done, eternity awaits.
- In the midst of the suffering servant, we are left processing three realities...three truths.
 - 1) Jesus paid it all
 - The pain that Jesus lived through is for you and me.
 - Jesus took that pain, endured that pain, and lived through that pain of Isaiah 52-53.
 - 2) I am off the hook...you are off the hook.
 - Nothing you do can make God love you more or less.
 - You don’t have to suffer so that you can be forgiven.
 - Jesus loves you and forgives you for who you are, and what you have done and what you will do.
 - The pain Jesus endured is enough, period...you don’t have to pay anything.
 - 3) Jesus offers you abundant life.
 - I think many of us have heard the analogy of a gift...if you don’t accept a gift that you are given, then it just sits there.
 - If you don’t open the present that you are given, then it’s kind of like a Schrodinger’s cat present...it’s there but you don’t know what it is so it could be anything...it could be a live cat or it could be a dead cat (terrible present).
 - In the gospels Jesus invites people to follow him...the disciples...the crowds...
 - The same invitation remains today... “Follow me,” Jesus says, “and I will give you abundant life.”

- Each of us has to choose to follow like the disciples who left their job as fishermen or Matthew who left his job as a tax collector or the crowds in the book of Acts who heard and saw that the Lord is good and committed themselves to pursuing Jesus the way Peter and Paul did.
 - Or we choose to run the opposite way like the crowds who heard Jesus say, “I am the bread of life” and they thought it was too weird so they went their own way, or we run like the man who made excuses when Jesus called him, saying, “Let me do all of these other things first...”
- Jesus took the weight of sin on himself.
 - You have nothing that you can do to make God love you, because the suffering servant did it.
 - And that suffering servant invites you into an abundant life here on this earth and in eternity to come.
- You have a piece of paper with some reflections on it...what is the suffering servant inviting you to do with that information?
 - How is the suffering servant inviting you to pursue that abundant life?
- One of the things that Jesus invites us to do is to share the Lord’s supper whenever we gather together.
 - The Lord’s supper/communion is God saying to us that he loves us and it is us making a commitment to follow God with all that we are.
 - If you were here last year, you will remember this...we are going to get up and make a big circle and pass the communion cups around.
 - If you are not ready to take communion, you can just pass the basket on to the next person.
 - As you pass the basket you can say, “This is the body of Christ broken for you.”
 - Once everyone has a cup, we will share together.

But he was pierced for our rebellion,
crushed for our sins.
He was beaten so we could be whole.
He was whipped so we could be healed. (Isaiah 53:5)

On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread ²⁴ and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁵ In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it.” ²⁶ For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord’s death until he comes again. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)