

Sermon Guide
Speaker : Pastor Robert Greene
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Sermon Series: The Drama of Redemption

The Voice of the Prophets

Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Acts 8:26-38

A Fundamental Question

The most fundamental question in the universe, repeatedly alluded to in the Old Testament, is how can a holy God save rebellious sinners who are due His judgment? If God is holy, just and by His very nature must punish sin and condemn the guilty, how can He continue to show love, grace and patience to sinners who instead deserve His justice? For if God overlooked sin, His holiness, justice and glory would be compromised; and if God simply destroyed all of humanity, His love and mercy would be compromised. It is in the unfolding drama of redemption, found in the Old and New Testaments, that we find resolution to these questions and theological tensions.

The Providence of God

Read Acts 8:26-38

Consider what God orchestrated in the life of the Ethiopian eunuch. This was a man returning home to Ethiopia from a five (5) month trip to Jerusalem. He is found by Philip, who, at the behest of an Angel, is sent to the same road that this Eunuch would be on, reading Isaiah. God, in His providence, wove these events and two men together in order that the one man might hear the good news of Jesus.

Application

Don't think that God doesn't do this kind of thing for just one (1) person. Each person who He calls to Himself counts to Him. Luke 15:10 "Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents." We have your plans and purposes that you think will get you where you most need to be, but God has His own plans for His glory and your salvation.

Application Questions

Have you considered what God may be weaving in your life the way he did in this eunuch's life?

Why do you think you're in the particular place you're at with the specific people you are surrounded by (e.g. Richmond, job, college, friends, etc.)?

Have you ever considered what God may be weaving together right now on your behalf?

What the Scriptures Say About Jesus

The Ethiopian eunuch was a sincerely curious man. There would be no reason for this man, in his station in life at that time, to make such a trip if he weren't at least open to the God of the Israelites. Philip finds him in his chariot reading Isaiah. The very reading of that text would not have been the simple act of opening an iPhone app that it is today; the scroll would have been 15-100 feet, very long and quite cumbersome. However, though he was sincerely interested he lacked understanding and needed Philip to teach him what the scriptures, beginning in Isaiah 53, said about Jesus.

Application Questions

Is your heart open to the things of God and are you sincere and curious in your desire to understand them?

Do you understand what the Scriptures say about Jesus?

God Will Send Jesus, But We Will Reject Him

Isaiah 53:1-3 "Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not."

"We didn't feel endorsed around Jesus. He was so lowly and unimpressive that our aspirations for power and reputation felt evil. His happy poverty made our wanting more and more feel foolish. His willingness to suffer for others made our craving for comforts feel selfish." - John Piper

Jesus was born in a manger, in a backyard stable. He was from the equivalent today of a little backwoods town, called Nazareth. There was nothing about Jesus physically that would cause Him to climb the social ladder. His views on life, money, lust, pride, everything, were counter to the culture around Him.

He Suffered for Our Sin as Our Substitute

Isaiah 53:4-6 "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

The essence of Christianity can be boiled down to the term "substitution". Man substitutes himself for God; he has turned to his own ways, his own wisdom and tried to put himself in the position of God and this is sin, the consequences of which are death. But God substitutes Himself for man; Jesus lived the life no man could live and died the death all men deserve to die. It is this that is the core of Christianity; in sin man substituted himself for God and in salvation, God substitutes Himself for man. This exchange is theologically referred to as imputation. God charges man's infinite debt of sin to man's substitute, Jesus. At the cross neither sin nor sinners are overlooked. Rather it is there that God expresses His judgment

on sin and, concurrently, God endures His judgment against sin. Thus, at the cross, sin is condemned, justice is upheld, and sinners are extended salvation by a loving God.

Application

You and I are like simple ignorant sheep. We have gone astray and turned to our own way. We substitute our ways for God's ways and our wisdom for God's wisdom. Jesus bore our grief, carried our sorrows, was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. He was a man of sorrows, but they were not His own they were ours for He did not deserve them. 2 Corinthians 5:21 "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Jesus Really Did Die

Isaiah 53:7-9 "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth."

Christ wasn't overpowered for He chose to not fight back. His death was unjust in every way but it was His choice to die in man's place. He really died.

Easter and the Resurrection

The word resurrection isn't expressly stated in Isaiah 53 but it is implicitly present in the passage. Seven hundred (700) years before it would happen, Isaiah foretells of the events concerning Christ. The resurrection is particularly highlighted in the bookends of the passage: Isaiah 52:13-15 and Isaiah 53:10-12.

Isaiah 52:13-15 "Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. As many were astonished at you—his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand."

Isaiah 53:10-12 "Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors."

These verses make clear that it was God's will to crush Jesus. His death was no accident; it was always the intended plan. It was God's will to uphold His glory, holiness and justice, while demonstrating His unending love by saving man through the death of His son. Jesus offered Himself as a guilt offering out of the anguish of His soul and died as a sacrifice. It is by His sacrifice that the charges could be transferred and man could be accounted righteous. He bore the iniquity of all and the resurrection displays that the price He paid was sufficient. He no longer suffers because His offering for sin was

sufficient and complete. Jesus defeated death by handing Himself over to it and raising Himself from it, never to die again. In this He conquered sin and Satan, Colossians 2:13-15 "And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him." The resurrection is the death of death & vindication of victory. Now He sits on high, satisfied that those He has saved and justified, His offspring, may now live as adopted righteous sons and daughters.

We Share In Christ's Spoils Of Victory

Isaiah 53:12 "Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors."

Application

One of the many spoils of victory we have in Christ is freedom from the fear of death. All our lives we have been subject to the slavish fear of death. We try to find ways to cope with this fear by preserving ourselves either physically or in historicity by getting plastic surgery or establishing legacies. We may seek to be an influential person in a community, shop excessively, be the best athlete or try to get elected to public office. Ann Patchet, in the New York Times, wrote, "Staving off our own death is one of our national pastimes. Whether it's exercise, checking our cholesterol or having a mammogram, we are always hedging against mortality."

Hebrews 2:14-15 "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery."

What Jesus at the cross, and the empty tomb, did for us was disempower Satan and deliver us, not only from the fear of death but actual death. Satan doesn't want us to recognize this because if we lose this fear he loses his leverage. Saint Augustine said the cross of Christ was like a mousetrap, the Lord offered himself there as bait, and the devil fell for it. He walked right into the trap, and Jesus sprang it on him - to disempower him. Jesus rose from the dead on the first Easter Sunday and defeated the enemy that we could not defeat. Now He sits triumphantly as King over life and death and we can rest in the knowledge of that.

Rev. 1:18 - "Fear not, I am the first and the last, 18 and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."

The Good News

"Jesus is saying to you right now, "I don't want you to bear your burden one moment longer. Let my chastisement give you peace. Let my stripes heal you." We are all like stupid sheep, wandering off from him through our own futile self-remedies and self-righteous excuses. Who can deny it? But look what God has done. God has laid on Christ the iniquity of us all. Believe it, and entrust your guilt to him.

The cross isn't a dreamy religious ideal; the cross is a power, it's working. The one who descended to unimaginable depths is now enjoying the spoils of complete victory. He's actively saving guilty people today. He treats transgressors as his friends and shares his victory with his former enemies. He stands before the Father, making intercession for the very ones who drove him to death. His cross is a power

that evil cannot conquer or even understand, but to God it's everything. Nothing will ever rob Christ of his hard-won right to justify the ungodly. Who else can love you so miraculously and helpfully? Who else would willingly serve as your scapegoat? What are you waiting for? "The guilt that men are never able to cleanse, in spite of sacrifices, penance, remorse and vain regrets, God himself wipes away; and men are at once freed from their past and transformed."¹³ You can be freed from your past. But Christ is the only way. His sacrifice was good enough for God. Why shouldn't it be good enough for you?" - Ray Ortlund

Application Questions

What prevents you from knowing and submitting to the Saviour of the world?

Sermon Link : [The Voice of the Prophets](#)

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