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**October 24, 2021**  
**in the Season of Pentecost**

**Christians Imitate Christ in Serving Others**

It is more natural—and much easier—to enjoy being served by others than to serve others. We like being waited on more than we like waiting on others. Most people feel this way, and believers struggle with the problem as well. Jesus didn't struggle with this challenge. His entire ministry—living, dying, and rising again—provided for people what they could not provide for themselves. He did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. Jesus' service to us is our model and our motivation.

**Sermon**

**Isaiah 53:10-12**

**It is an unbelievable prophecy.**

**Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. 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. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.**

What are the chances that you could predict what would happen to you tomorrow? Maybe you could predict some things that you normally do like go to work, go to school, see a friend, etc. How about predicting something that is going to happen a year from now? Basically, impossible right? The prophet Isaiah, through the power of the Holy Spirit was able to predict with precision what was going to happen to Jesus 700 years before he was even born. Unbelievable right? It's hard to imagine that what we hear in Isaiah 53 is even a prophecy. Isaiah makes it seem like he was a disciple who followed Jesus as he walked and carried his cross to Golgotha. "He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. . . The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. . . 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." These are the words Isaiah speaks a few verses before our selected text for this morning. In them we see a clear portrait of our Savior Jesus and his death.

**It is an unbelievable prophecy.**

Isaiah is the most well-known prophet in the Old Testament. He lived in Jerusalem around 740 B.C. It was a time of uncertainty for God's people. Assyria, one of the world powers of this time was building strength and sweeping through the land conquering nations left and right. Israel on the other hand was not doing so hot. The kingdom was split into north and south. The north had been conquered by the Assyrians in 722. The southern kingdom, by a miracle of God, was able to survive the Assyrians. God sent the angel of the LORD to slaughter 185,000 Assyrian soldiers who were laying siege upon the city. But their time of judgement was still to come. Isaiah prophesied about the destruction of the southern kingdom by the Babylonians. All of this was because of the Israelite's unfaithfulness. They had chased after worthless idols. They had abandoned their God. They had sinned.

And yet Isaiah is not only a prophet of doom and gloom. Here in Isaiah 53, we see a beautiful and yet brutal prophecy, a perfect paradox, an unbelievable prophecy. A prophecy which is pointing to Christ and fulfilled by him for you. The LORD had a plan to restore his rebellious nation. God was going to bring them out of captivity, forgive them, justify them, die for them.

**The Lord made his life an offering.** Isaiah is using visual language and images that those living in Jerusalem would have picked up on very easily. The Israelites had been commanded by God to offer sacrifices to him as offerings. God had given Moses instructions for multiple kinds of offerings which they could offer to God. These offerings were the way in which the Israelites could worship their God and praise him. They were also given as the way to pay for their sins both the intentional and unintentional. All of this was to foreshadow the sacrifice that Christ was going to make. They were pointing ahead to him. These sacrifices were only temporary but his sacrifice is once for all.

The priest would slaughter the animal in the temple and drain its blood into a bowl. Then he would use that blood and sprinkle it on the corners of the altar. Finally, he would place the animal upon the altar and burn it as an offering to God. These sacrifices went on for hundreds of years. Millions of animals slain. To us, this may seem extreme, but it shows the seriousness of sin. It shows that sin cannot go unpunished and that blood is necessary to atone for sin. "It is the blood that makes atonement for sin." The author of Hebrews says, "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." And so God made Jesus' life an offering for sin. Jesus shed his blood as the ultimate sacrifice.

For this to happen, Jesus had to **be numbered with the transgressors**. For this sacrifice to count for the sins of the world, Jesus needed to come down into this sinful world. He needed to take on human flesh, suffer as humans suffer, and be tempted in the way that we are tempted. And yet he was a "lamb without defect." He did this all without sinning. The only one who did not break God's law was punished in your place. He was arrested and placed before Pontius Pilate who offered the people the choice of either releasing Barabbas the criminal or Jesus. And they chose Jesus. And when he was lifted up on the cross, it was with two other criminals on his right and on his left. He was numbered with the sinners although he had not sinned even once.

Jesus was not only numbered among the transgressors, but **he bore the sins of the transgressors**. He bore your sins and mine. Isaiah uses a couple different words for sin. Sin and transgressions. Sin is the overarching disease that we all have because of the fall into sin. It is missing the mark no matter how hard we try. Imagine shooting a bow and arrow at a target and every single time, no matter how hard you try you miss. We can't help it. We cannot hit the mark that God demands us to hit. Surely, we are sinful from birth. Paul illustrates this very well in Romans 7, "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." We know exactly what Paul is talking about here. We have a conscience that tells us what is right and wrong and yet we cannot help but do wrong. We convict ourselves of our sin.

We might hear the word "transgression" and immediately think of it as sin. It is sin but there is a bit of difference in the imagery. Transgression is when we deliberately go against the will of God. It is knowing the line that you shouldn't cross and going over it anyway. It's cheating on your taxes because "it's only a little bit and the government doesn't need that money anyway." It's looking at that website or magazine that we know we shouldn't look at but decide it's okay just this one time. It's telling God "I know what you have to say about this, but I don't care. I know what is best for my own life." God has every right to condemn us. We have been unfaithful to him just like the Israelites at the time Isaiah wrote this prophecy.

But God loves you. And he sent Jesus to fulfill this unbelievable prophecy for you! A prophecy about Jesus bearing the punishment for sin in your place. Your sins were nailed on the cross with Jesus. Those sins died on the cross with him. Every time you missed the mark. Every time you crossed the line. God sent Jesus to **justify the many**. That's you! Jesus came to set you free from the chains of sin. He has declared you not guilty of all your trespasses and sins. They were all placed upon Jesus on the cross and paid for in full. The gavel has been pounded. The charges have been dropped. You are not guilty.

To confirm that this has actually taken place; that God accepted this perfect offering, God did not abandon his Holy One to the grave. Jesus saw **the light of life**. On the third day he rose from the dead. He confirmed his victory over sin and showed his power over the grave. "Where oh death is your victory, where is your sting?" God left no room for us to wonder whether or not Jesus' sacrifice was enough. The grave is empty. We no longer have to worry about the old covenant that God made with Moses and all the sacrifices that went along with it.

Jesus rose from the dead and **was given a portion among the great**. Forty days after his resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father. Jesus once again took hold of the glory that was always his.

While on earth he did not make full use of his divine power and glory, but once his sacrifice was complete, once he died to save the world, he took up his power and glory again and went up to his heavenly Father to rule and to...

**Make intercession for transgressors.** Jesus now sits at the Father's side and speaks to him on your behalf. He pleads to the Father on your behalf when we sin and tells him, "Father, look at the nail marks in my hands and in my feet, look at my side. I have paid for their sins. Forgive them for my sake. This is why I sacrificed myself."

And that is exactly what our Father does. He looks at the nail marks, listens to him, and forgives our sins. The sins which we may not even realize we commit, and the sins which we know all too well. They are forgiven because of Jesus. Have you ever thought about why Jesus was raised to life with the nail marks still in his hands? He certainly could have been raised with healed hands and feet. But he kept them as a sign of the sacrifice he made for proof and for comfort.

And now **He will see his offspring.** Because of all of this, we are called the children of God. God claims us as his own. In our baptism he marks us as one of his dearly loved children. We are co-heirs to eternal life with Christ. Because Jesus rose from the dead, you too will be raised up on the last day. Jesus does not hog all the spoils of his victory to himself. No. He shares them with us. He gives us a seat at his table and a room in his house. What a gift!

Sometimes I wish that I knew exactly what the future held. It would be helpful to know what the stock market will do in the next five years. It would be reassuring to know where your children will be when they grow up and what they will do. I think that would make things a little easier, wouldn't you? But we don't know what will happen tomorrow or the day after. But we do know this, because of this unbelievable prophecy and the fact that Jesus fulfilled it, we do know one thing that our future holds, a spot in heaven. God worked out the salvation of the world long before you or I were born; way before Isaiah the prophet was born. He planned a spot for you at the wedding feast of the lamb. The lamb who was slain, for you and for me. But a lamb who was victorious. Amen.