

April 3rd, 2022.

Isaiah 53

Jesus Christ, the Suffering Servant

Ver1 Who have believed our message
and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

Ver2 He grew up before him like a tender shoot,
and like a root out of dry ground.
He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

Ver3 He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrow and familiar with suffering.
Like one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Ver4 Surely he took up our infirmities
and carried our sorrows,
yet we considered him stricken by God,
smitten by him, and afflicted.

Ver5 But he was pierced for our transgression,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

Ver6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Verse 7 He was oppressed and afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before her shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

Ver8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away.
And who can speak of his descendants?
For he was cut off from the land of the living;
for the transgression of my people he was stricken.

Ver9 He was assigned a grave with the wicked,
and with the rich in his death,
though he had done no violence,
nor was any deceit in his mouth.

Ver10 Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer,
and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering,
he will see his offspring and prolong his days,
and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

Ver11 After the suffering of his soul,
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.

Ver12 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.

Jesus Christ, the Suffering Servant

Yoko Lee, April 3rd, 2022.

During the Lenten period of examining the Passion of Christ, I would like to share with you the grace of the Cross through Isaiah 53. The prophet Isaiah was called by God in BC742 and is famous for his prophecies about the Babylonian captivity and Jesus Christ. In particular, chapter 53, which I would like to study with you today; it is about the "suffering servant," which is the best part of Christ prophecy. About 700 years after this prophecy, the Savior Jesus Christ came to this world, was crucified, and resurrected, just as God had prophesied. I am amazed that God's word was fulfilled without losing a single word. Through today's scripture, I pray that we may examine together the meaning of the cross of Jesus.

Chapter 53 is written in a five-part structure: verse 1 is the introduction, verses 2-3 are His background and Passion, verses 4-6 reveal the hidden mysteries of His Passion and is the most beloved part; verses 7-9 are about His last days; verses 10-12 discuss how to make the most of His life and how to produce the good fruit to the world.

Verses 2-9 are very well known in terms of the suffering servant, but today I would like to focus on verses 1 and 10-12. Because I realized the fact that God was pleased and wanted Jesus to suffer. I still remember painfully how when my second son was five years old, he was suddenly hit on a slide in the park by a boy he did not know at all and almost broke his nose. Parents never want their children to be in pain. That is human nature. But God caused His only son to suffer pain on the cross. Why is that?

First, the introductory verse.

Verse1 Who have believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

The death of Jesus is an unreasonable death and seems like a defeat, but God has done His work of saving sinners through the cross of Jesus Christ. This first verse connects with verses 10 and following. Through Jesus, God has revealed, "I am the true God!" The apostle Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 1:18, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

Verses 2-3 are about his upbringing and reflection on his Passion.

Verse2 He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that

we should desire him

Here, "him, this man" refers to the Son Jesus prophesied in the vision Daniel saw (Daniel 7:13). Jesus, who came into the world in human form, was born in the small countryside of Bethlehem and grew up as an ordinary man (Jeremiah 23:5; Luke 2:6, 7).

Verse 3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrow and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Jesus, the Son of God, even shed tears with Mary, who wept that her brother Lazarus had died (John 11:33-35), and He understood many pains and illnesses of people. Yet the religious leaders and the Israelites despised and did not accept Jesus (John 1:11).

Verses 4-6 are about the mystery hidden in the famous Passion of the Servant.

Verse 4 Surely, he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.

Jesus bore human pain and suffering. He healed a man who had been blind from birth (Luke 9), set free a demon-possessed man (Matthew 8), and countless other miracles Jesus performed (John 21:30). However, the religious leaders plotted to kill Jesus (John 11:53) and eventually crucified Him, deceiving the people that it was judgment from God.

Verse 5 But he was pierced for our transgression, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Jesus was beaten, crushed, and pierced with arrows for the sin of human disobedience, our transgressions (John 19). Jesus, who taught us to love even our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44), prays for the sins of those who are crucifying Him. "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing (Luke 23:34)."

Because Jesus was chastened, we have peace (John 14:27); because Jesus was wounded, we are healed (Mark 16:17-18). Today, we pray that you may have abundant forgiveness of sins, peace, and healing from Jesus. Especially I pray that all the sick will be healed in the name of Jesus.

Verse 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

The disciples whom Jesus loved, like a flock of sheep, all betrayed Him and fled (Luke

22:48, 61; Mark 14:50). I pray that we all follow Jesus continually even when we face trial.

Verses 7-9 describe his last days.

Verse 7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

Like a sheep that does not speak before the shearer, he did not open his mouth. Peter, who had betrayed Jesus three times, watched Jesus' trial from afar. "When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed (1 Peter 2:23-24)." Who is on trial now? Let's leave everything to God who judges us righteously as Jesus did. Let us believe that God Himself will clear us of all our regrets and false accusations.

Verse 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.

Because Jesus called God "My Father" and taught that those who believe in Him are forgiven of their sins and have eternal life (John 5:23-24) and the religious leaders accused Jesus of blasphemy, and seduced the crowds to crucify Him on Passover (Matthew 27:37). Jesus' life was ended at the hands of God the Father (Luke 23:44-48).

Verse 9 He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

Criminals were placed on either side of the cross of Jesus the Son. The death of the innocent Jesus was disgraceful. Later, Jesus was buried in the tomb of Joseph from Arimathea, a rich man (Matthew 27:57-60). It is amazing how these details of the prophecy were also fulfilled.

Verses 10-12 are about how his life became a power in God's hand. This is an important place to start today.

Verse 10 Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the

LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days,
and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

Jesus' crucifixion appeared to be due to the jealousy of the religious leaders and the harsh rule of Rome. However, behind the crucifixion was God's plan, and He wanted His Son to be crucified. It was to give life to many through the cross. And Jesus Himself willingly accepted the cross that God the Father wanted Him to bear. John 10:15, "And I lay down my life for the sheep." Jesus, who became the Lamb of Atonement, prays this way before the cross. "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them (John 17:13)".

Finally, Jesus died on the cross, rose from the dead on the third day, and His Son Jesus was able to see His descendants for many years to come. John 17:2, "For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him." This is the power of the hand of the Lord and God's power. The reason God our Father and Jesus the Son rejoiced in the cross was to give us eternal life. That is why even that painful and agonizing cross is made glory. The depth of this glory is truly immeasurable.

Verse 11 After the suffering of his soul, 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.

God and Jesus were satisfied together when they saw the fruit of the suffering of the cross, the resurrection. Also, through this resurrection, those who believe in Jesus are forgiven of their sins and are now recognized by God as righteous. God and Jesus were very satisfied when they saw this work of God. Romans 1:17 says, "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written 'The righteous will live by faith.'"

Verse 12 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.

Through the cross and resurrection, Jesus won the victory from the war against Satan and gave eternal life to many. The number of people who have ever believed in Jesus is enormous from 2,000 years ago and still now there have been many Christians around the world who have believed in the name of Jesus. Revelation 12:10, 11 says, "Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: 'Now have come the salvation and the power

and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them!" The cross revealed the power of God's arm by making His Son Jesus our Savior and King of Kings.

It is amazing to see the exact fulfillment of biblical prophecy about 700 years before Jesus Christ was born. We are also amazed at the fact that Jesus' sacrifice 2,000 years ago has given us forgiveness of sins, salvation, eternal life, peace, and healing today. The Creator God who made heaven and earth could have used some of angels and could have defeated Satan by force of arms. However, God gave us victory through the suffering on the cross.

And as you know, last year I proceeded to pay my own legal fees to get the children to see their father. However, my ex-husband suddenly cancelled the appointment, and both of my children were hurt more badly than I was. The counselor asked if I could visit her occasionally. "Why do you let them see their father? It's dangerous, and maybe the other party will take the children you have raised so carefully." I replied. "I am a Christian. God asks me to forgive my enemy and I want to forgive him." She looked at me curiously. At that time, I looked brave, but I wondered if I had made the right decision sometimes. However, during this period of Lenten, I was able to look up to God who accomplishes victory through the Passion, while thinking deeply about Isaiah 53.

Jesus' suffering on the cross bore noble fruit that gives us eternal life. We Christians should be able to live this miracle of God. I do not know what the future outcome of my forgiveness for my ex-husband will be. Maybe my abuser husband will try something and put me in a pit again. But I feel Jesus saying in my heart. "My children can live differently from this world. It is a life like mine. From the cross comes victory. Once you die, I will bring you back to life. I will lead your life from suffering to life, so don't be afraid, believe in me and take up the challenge. Forgive him, your debtor." I really hope to practice this way of Jesus in my life and experience the power of God.

Philippians 2:5-11, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus (5): Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped (6), but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made

in human likeness (7). And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! (8) Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name (9), that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth (10), and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (11).”

We know more or less the power of the cross of Jesus, don't we? And the cross is "God's way" that He desires and please. Christians can challenge Jesus' way of life without fear. What is the challenge of the cross for you? You can forgive your co-workers who speak gossip of you. You can do something bigger. A pastor I know was in a car accident right after he came to Japan. He didn't let the driver pay for the repairs, shared the gospel with him, and he let the driver parted ways. I admire people around me who live like the way Jesus lived. I pray that the cross of Jesus will work in the lives of all of us and that God's power will be manifested in our daily lives.

Let's pray together. Our loving Heavenly Father! God wanted the cross and Jesus was willing to follow your will. We thank you. However, this way is honestly difficult for us and sometimes makes us afraid to do the same. But God urges us to try to live like Jesus, doesn't He? Please guide us, the Holy Spirit, that we may become more like Jesus and experience God's power through the cross. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Reference

1. Old Testament III, Isaiah 53, translated by the Old Testament Translation Committee, Iwanami Shoten, 2005.
2. New Common Translation, Study Edition, 2014.