

Guest Preacher - Rev. Roddy John Campbell

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Preacher: Rev. RJ Campbell

[0 : 00] Seeking the Lord's blessing, let us turn back to the portion of scripture that we read together in the Old Testament, the prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 52, and we'll read at verse 13.

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 is foreign 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 was the son of Amos, which is not to be confused with Amos, the prophet. Jewish tradition maintains that he was born into nobility and mixed freely with royalty.

He is said to be a brother of King Amos and so a cousin of King Isaiah. Again, Jewish tradition says that he was born into during the reign of King Manasseh.

[1 : 20] Little really is known about his personal history, but that he received his call to the prophetic office in the year that King Isaiah died, nearly 200 years after the death of King Solomon, and some 20 years after Assyria invaded and conquered the 10 northern tribes known as the nation of Israel.

He functioned as prophet in Judea, or the southern kingdom, and he prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Asa, and Hezekiah.

His contemporaries in the prophetic office were Hosea and Micah. Isaiah witnessed the final years of Israel's spiritual decline and the disaster that followed.

And God called him to warn the tiny nation of Judah and its capital Jerusalem about a similar outcome that would come their way as happened to the nation of Israel unless they repented and turned to God.

So that the ministry of Isaiah occurred at a crucial point in the history of Judah. He condemned the empty ritualism of Israel and the idolatry into which many of the people had fallen.

[2 : 50] He foresaw the coming Babylonian captivity of Judah because of their departure from the ways of the Lord. But probably the prophet is best remembered for his messianic prophecies, which begins at chapter 7 of this book and is found throughout the book of Isaiah.

Isaiah. However, a scholar from Germany isolated four passages which became known as the servant songs. And they are Isaiah 42, verse 1 to 4.

Isaiah 49, verse 1 to 6. Isaiah 50, verse 4 to 9. And Isaiah 52, verse 13. And the whole of chapter 53.

And perhaps we can call a fifth song if we look at chapter 61, verse 1 to 3. But our focus this morning is going to be on one of those seven songs which we find from chapter 52 and verse 13, including chapter 53.

But our main focus this morning will be on the words that we have taken as our text from chapter 52, which makes up the fourth song. And which is probably the most memorable of all the songs that we have in the book of Isaiah.

[4:17] And although the nation Israel is designated as God's servant in several passages, it cannot in every instance of its usage mean the nation Israel.

So we come then to ask here, who is the servant of the servant songs? And the consensus is that in the passages referred to as servant songs, the servant is the Lord Jesus Christ.

And this fourth song, which begins in chapter 52 and verse 13, ends in chapter 53. It begins and ends with a description of the exaltation and glory of the righteous servant.

But in between the mountain tops of glory lays the deep valley of shame and suffering, which the servant must pass through for us and for our salvation.

These verses in chapter 52, that we have taken as our text, stand as the introduction to the prophecy of the suffering servant, which we find especially brought before us in the following chapter.

[5:29] The subject of all these passages is the servant of the Lord, individualized as the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, who suffers for our sin.

What we have really is the suffering servant of Jehovah. And the details are so minute that no human could have predicted it and defer to Jesus as the New Testament attests to us.

In this song, there are different speakers. But here in the introduction, it is obvious to us that it is the Father that is speaking. It is God the Father that is speaking.

And he is throwing our attention to his servant. This is the servant in whom God the Father finds special satisfaction and special delight.

Behold, my servant shall act wisely. He shall be high and lifted up and shall be exalted. In chapter 52, we have the same exhortation.

[6:34] For we read there, Behold, my servant to my behold, appalled, my chosen in whom my souls delight. We are called to behold.

Now, this is a little word by which God in Scripture speaks and seeks for us to draw our attention to matters which are of the utmost importance for us to know.

In the New Testament, you'll recall a very familiar phrase that John the Baptist said to his disciples when Jesus was approaching them, when he said, Behold, the Lamb of God, which takes away the sins of the world.

And we are exhorted by the Word of God to direct our attention on to his beloved and only begotten Son. In the form of a servant, he would have our eyes to be fixed on him who has become the suffering servant of Jehovah.

This is the servant who was sent by the Father to accomplish a work and to fulfill a mission in which he, the Father, delights.

[7:54] The fourth song is a story of tragedy and triumph. It is the story of a seemingly ordinary man with extraordinary love for those who hated and abused him.

It is a story told with many details, even although Isaiah never lived to meet the person of whom he wrote. But it is even more than that.

It is also the story of a God who wants to have a relationship with his people, so that he sent his Son as the servant, not merely to tell them and show them how much he cares for them, but to pay for their sins, so that they could have a relationship with him.

The story of this fourth song is not just about the suffering servant. It's about the one who would send him and deliver him up as well.

What the fourth song shows us is a relational, compassionate God. And that's very important for us.

[9 : 07] When we draw near to God, that we know him as a relational, compassionate God. What we have here in the fourth song is a heavy passage of Scripture.

Nevertheless, it is given to us in order for us to focus on it, in order for us to meditate upon it, in order for it to bring comfort and encouragement to us.

And yet, at the same time, here we find that, although it is a heavy passage of Scripture, involves a lot of suffering, that beauty arises out of the ugliness of the passage.

Hope emerges from the horror, and the victory of which Christ the servant so rightly shares with all who put their trust in him, so that they become more than conquerors through him that loved them.

This victory was not achieved without immense cost on the part of the servant. We might call the cross of Golgotha, on which the servant dies, the ugly and the beauty of God's ultimate act of reconciliation.

[10 : 28] When we stand before the cross, we see perfection itself suffering for transgressions and for transgressors like me and you.

And at the same time, we must go beyond the cross on Golgotha for the crucifixion. The cross must be remembered in conjunction with the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Bible speaks of salvation as a great salvation. And that which belongs to the greatness of that salvation that is offered to me and you through the gospel, is that it is the salvation of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Although our focus when we come to the cross of Golgotha may be very much on the Son, and that is quite right for it to be, yet we must not focus on the Son apart from the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Because the Trinity, the triune God, is present at the cross of Golgotha, working out our salvation. Well, here we come to the one who says that to behold the servant.

[11 : 57] The servant who says, Behold, I have come. In the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do your will, O my God.

Your law is within my heart. When on earth he could say to his disciples beside the well at Samaria, My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work.

To the crowd which he miraculously fed, he said, For I have come down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him who sent me.

And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

The Father points with delight to him, and he says, Behold my servant. And to me and to you today, he is saying, Behold my servant.

[13 : 09] We are told, Behold my servant shall act wisely. In the authorised version, it is, Behold my servant shall deal prudently. But it would be better translated, that he will be successful, or have success.

That he shall prosper. Behold my servant shall be successful. Behold my servant shall prosper. So despite how gloomy things appear in the events that Isaiah describes in this song, we are never to fear, for God's servant will enjoy success.

He shall prosper. He shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. And as the end of the song proclaims, he shall see his offspring.

Well, let us this morning think for a short time on how remarkable these words are. Behold my servant.

There is a unique relationship between the persons of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But here in the song presented to us by the prophet, the Father calls our attention to his servant.

[14:30] And who is this servant? Well, we have already said that he is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible reveals that the Father has chosen the Son to this role, and that he gave him a task to perform and to fulfill.

And this task that the Father gave the Son can be summed up as the redemptive plan of God. And as we already alluded to, this redemptive plan of God is engaged by all the persons of the Godhead.

The Father chose the Son to the role of being his servant, and gave him a task to accomplish the redemption of sinners.

The Bible makes it clear that it is God himself who provides the way of salvation. It is God who provides everything that is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son. The entire action is from God.

[15:49] It is important for us to grasp that, for there is a tendency today to forget or to ignore that. The Bible reminds us that even the birth of Jesus Christ was something that God, the first person of God, it did in the fullness of time that he sent his Son.

But God did not just send his Son, but he sent his only Son. He did not just send his only Son, but he sent him to die.

He did not just send him to die, but he delivered him up. He did not just deliver him up, but he spared him not.

by laying upon him the iniquities of us all, and dying a death that involved him in satisfying the infinite, just wrath of God against sin.

How great is our salvation? And we know that we cannot, in one sermon, or many sermons, or in a lifetime, comprehend, or grasp, or fully understand the servitude of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[17:14] In heaven, we shall still be learning of the servitude of the Lord Jesus Christ. He will be before us as the lamb's laying from the foundation of the world.

However, it is our duty to which we are called here, by the Father, to behold the servant. Let us consider what this meant for the Son to become the servant of Jehovah.

Now, I know that a while back in this congregation, we looked at this in some detail with the words of the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Philippians and chapter 2.

Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but tempted himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

There we are told that the servant in his pre-incarnate state was in the form of God. He was God, the Son, within the mystery of the Trinity.

[18:37] And when Paul speaks of Jesus as being in the form of God, he is telling us or pointing us to the pre-incarnate Jesus as being, in very nature, God.

The form of God does not mean anything less than Godhood. Essentially, Paul is saying that the servant as the Son of God shares fully in the very essence of God.

To borrow a phrase from the Nicene Creed, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is very God of very God. Servanthood did not mean that the Son ceased to be what he eternally was, God the Son.

He was and is and continues to be God the Son, even in his servanthood. behold my servant, behold my Son, in whom my soul delights.

The form of God does not mean anything less than Godhood. The form of God is not something different from God or less than God. He was in equality with God.

[19 : 44] He was equal with God for he was God the Son. and what the Bible tells us through Paul is that he took upon him the form of a servant.

Being born in the likeness of men and being found in uniform, he humbled himself. He condescended. He who was in the form of God, God the Son, equal with God, had all the priorities of Godhood, but he did not cling to them in a grasping way or as a thing to be held on to for advantage.

But he made himself of no reputation by taking upon himself the form of a servant or, as the Greek says, in the form of a slave. and at the same time, he did not lose the form of God.

Who is the servant? It is God the Son, equal with the other persons of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Christ was like a slave. He voluntarily condescended by veiling the glories and the prerogatives or the privileges that belonged to him as the Son of God.

[21 : 05] He was made in the likeness of men. He veiled all his rights by clothing himself in human nature. As it is stated by Paul in the second letter to the Corinthians where he writes, For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor so that you by his poverty might become rich.

When a rich man becomes poor his manner of existence is changed, but not his nature as a person. Christ never ceased to be the divine Son of God, yet he veiled up the riches and prerogatives that belong to him for the lowliness and the poverty of our life in Palestine.

Taking the form of a servant was not God minus. Taking the form of a servant was God plus.

Christ the second person. God the Son took to himself human nature and united it to his person so that he now as a servant had two distinct natures but remained one person forever.

Now that is a mystery, but it's God manifest in the flesh. Christ taking the form of a slave meant that he became dependent on his father and on the power of the Holy Spirit.

[22 : 56] He puts himself voluntary into the circumstances wherein, as the song recounts, people mocked him, they spat on him, they made fun of him, he was treated with hootness, he was treated with contempt, his glory was veiled and he was despised and rejected of men.

They saw no beauty in him that they should desire him, he was a root out of a dry ground without form or comeliness. Servitude for Jesus meant that he became what he was not, but he continued to be what he always was.

And Christ as a servant took everything that is involved in becoming truly human, except sin. the marvel of his condescension, the marvel of his humiliation.

He who was truly God became truly man and remained truly God. In the servitude of Jesus, we have the God man.

And here the Father exhorts us and he says, behold my servant. Behold my servant.

[24 : 24] We are not to confine Christ's humiliation simply to the act of incarnation, although the incarnation was an act of humiliation. But his humiliation continued in his status as servant.

So that we read there, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death. His whole earthly life was a life of continuous humiliation from the moment he was conceived in the womb of his mother until he rose from the dead.

His whole earthly life was a life of continuous humiliation. salvation. To the point where he was obedient, as Paul told us, to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Reminding us that Jesus did not die a gentle death, but he died as a slave or as a common criminal, in torment on a cross of shame.

And there Paul draws us our attention to the fact of this voluntary action of Jesus. He made himself of no reputation.

[25 : 39] He made himself of no reputation. He took the form of a servant. He humbled himself. He was not forced, but he voluntarily made himself nothing.

He veiled his glory and chose to occupy the position of a servant or slave. the greatness of his condescension, the greatness of his humiliation.

The Father tells us that in his success that he shall be high and lifted up and shall be exalted. There are those who maintain that in these words, he shall be high, is a reference to the resurrection of Jesus.

And that the words and lifted up is a reference to his ascension. And exaltation is a reference to his enthronement to the Father's right hand.

So what is spoken of here by the Father in the song is the servant's resurrection, his ascension, and his kingly exaltation. Behold, my servant shall act wisely.

[26 : 49] He shall be high and lifted up and shall be exalted. And we notice here that after the Father introduces the servant, he addresses the servant directly in verse 14.

And the first part of the astonishment that makes up the mystery of the servant, as many were astonished at you, his appearance was so marred beyond human semblance and is foreign beyond that of the children of mankind.

This passage is particularly descriptive of regarding the face of Jesus after he had endured the terrible Roman scourging, the beatings, the blows to his face with a rod which the soldiers mockingly called a king's scepter, and the crushing of the crown of thorns upon his head.

By the time he was nailed on the cross, his face was a mess with blood streaming down all over and even all over his body. They're astonished at the depth of his sufferings.

Our Lord's appearance was so marred that those who passed by were astonished at his visage. It plainly says that his appearance was so disfigured that it went beyond that of any man.

[28 : 13] The question that was being asked was, is that human? man. The gospel records for us the enormous rough treatment that was experienced and endured by Jesus as the servant.

It is interesting that after he rose from the dead, the body of the resurrection, the only marks recorded for us are those of his hand, feet, and side.

But here the prophet speaks of his face as being battered and bruised. But we must not draw the conclusion that his physical sufferings looked worse than others who have undergone great physical sufferings which has marred their bodies and faces.

What is so astonishing is that he has experienced a form of suffering while he is sinless. A sinless person should not suffer because suffering is a consequence of sin.

Jesus is sinless. So it is a matter of astonishment that he suffered. At the end of his earthly life, Jesus demanded from his accusers, which one of you convicts me of sin?

[29 : 43] They could not. Even when he was brought before Pontius Pilate, the governor had to admit the innocence of Jesus. I find no guilt in him.

When Judas, his betrayer, brought back the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priest and the elders, he said, I have sinned by betraying innocent blood. Peter could write, he committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

Jesus in the upper room discourse said, for the ruler of this world is coming, he has no claim on me, or as the authorised version has said, the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.

Luke records for us the conversation that took place between the two thieves. One of the criminals who were hanged, railed at Jesus, saying, are you not the Christ?

Save yourself on this. But the other thief rebuked him, and his words are very significant. He said to the other thief, do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation, and we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due rewards of our deeds.

[31 : 04] But this man has done nothing wrong. This man has recognised that the man on the middle cross was sinless, and he was astonished at his sufferings.

astonished at his sufferings. Astonished at the sufferings of one who voluntarily chose to suffer.

He came knowing that his mission as a chosen servant involved suffering. Towards the end of his earthly ministry, he often told his disciples, the Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day.

But verse 15 describes another form of astonishment. Just as astonishing as the sufferings of Jesus left the people, so will the reaction of the many nations and kings.

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.

[32 : 19] the mystery of the servant then, is this, that just as he shocked humanity by the brutality he experienced in his sufferings while a sinless person, so in the coming day he will sprinkle many nations, and even more amazingly, their mouths will literally hang open when they see him in all his majesty and glory.

The translation of the verb rounded here as sprinkle is a matter of long standing dispute. The word is a technical word associated with the priestly action of sprinkling blood and water and oil.

But in this verse there is no mention of the liquid used, rather the emphasis upon those who are sprinkled, the many nations. And some translators put the word startled here, arguing that it makes better sense when compared with the first sense of amazement, just as many were astonished or shocked, so the servant will startle many nations.

With the impact of his sufferings moving on from Israel to the many nations, moving out to the international sphere, moving away from the cross, to many nations.

So many, but there are those who want to keep the word sprinkle, and they see here an allusion to the priestly function of Christ later on in the song in chapter 53 and verse 10, where his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days, and the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

[34 : 09] A reference to the worldwide ministry of the servant which shall continue to be a source of astonishment. Just as many were aghast at what is on the servant's suffering, so by way of contrast, his work will affect many nations by removing their guilt and their sins.

How this is to be achieved is not explained until later on in the song in chapter 53. the impact of the servant's work here is told that kings shall shut their mouths because of him.

This implies a response of astonishment and awe as the true significance of the servant's work is related to them. For that which has not been told them they see and that which they have not heard, they understand.

They had not heard of God's great love for mankind before. That his love was so great that he sent his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

That Jesus as the servant would judge our sins by bearing in himself what our sins deserved in his own sufferings.

[35 : 33] Paul quotes verse 15 in his letter to the Romans in chapter 15 verse 21 as he outlines his ministry to the Christians in Rome, an aspect of which was intention to go to different places with the gospel.

But it is also possible that this was another fulfillment. Peter in Acts cites Psalm 2 that we have just sung to show that it was the rulers of the earth who put Jesus to death.

At that time they had plenty to say. But the father here says that the time shall come when kings shall shut their mouths because of him.

Or it could also be a reference to the day of judgment when we are told that the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful and everyone slave and free hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

Whatever the fulfillment of the verse, the words make clear to us that the only appropriate response is one of astonishment.

[36 : 54] Take note of Peter's words in Acts chapter 2. Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him, this is the servant, who has suffered, that the Lord has made him both Lord and Christ.

And we are told that their hearts were cut. Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, brothers, what shall we do?

Well, what is your own response to the gospel? What is your own response to the one to whom the Father summons you to behold?

Behold my servant. What is your own response to the servant? What is your own response to the love of God as manifested in the suffering of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ?

The writer to the Hebrews says, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? And part of the great salvation is that the servant of Jehovah suffered what you and I must suffer unless we embrace him by faith and trust in him and lean upon him.

[38 : 21] Unless we take him as being our substitute by faith, then we must suffer the consequences of our sin. But here is the servant who came voluntarily, took upon himself what our sins deserve in his own body on the cross.

How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation that involved the Son of God condescending, taking upon himself our nature so that in that nature he could suffer the consequences of our sin so that we could be set free, that we would receive salvation?

How can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. Eternal and ever blessed Lord, we know that we only touch the hem of that great salvation that you have worked out through thine own Son for sinners such as we are.

But we pray, O Lord, that through thy Spirit thou would give us even in small measure to see the greatness of the salvation that thou has worked out and is offering to us through the gospel.

And we pray, O Lord, that we would take hold of that salvation by faith, that we would experience the joy of that salvation in our hearts. We pray, O Lord, that the gospel this day would be accompanied by the power of thy Spirit, for without thee we can do nothing.

[40 : 03] It will just be mere words, but we pray that we may be convicted in our hearts, and that we may lean more and more upon thyself. We ask, O Lord, that thou would continue with us in the evening, and forgive us for all our sins.

In Jesus' name, Amen. We shall conclude by singing from Psalm 72 in the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 72 in the Scottish Psalter at verse 17.

Amen.

So let it be.

We shall sing these verses to the Lord's praise from Psalm 72, verse 17 to the end. His name forever shall endure, last like the sun it shall. His name forever shall endure, last like the sun it shall then shall be blessed in him and blessed all nations shall be poor.

[41 : 44] The blessed be the Lord of the Lord of Israel For thee adore God God as as as as as But blessed be His glorious name to all eternity.

The whole and the greatest glory of heaven. Amen. So let it be.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore. Amen.