

Unlikely Answer to an Unlikely People

Isaiah 52.13-53

Main Idea

The Lord will use a Suffering Servant to make atonement for sin in order to bring healing to God's people and glory to God's Name.

Overview

High and Exalted (Isaiah 52.13-15)

- The Lord's Servant will:
 - Act wisely (applies the truth accurately)
 - High & lifted up
 - Exalted
 - As many were astonished by Israel they will be astonished by the Lord's servant:
 - His appearance will be marred beyond human semblance
 - Form beyond that of a child of humanity
- In so doing, He will sprinkle many nations (the word could be "startle" many nations):
 - Leviticus 4.6, 17 use the same word to denote a blood as a sin offering
 - "Sprinkling many nations" then could mean through His blood He will atone for the
 - sin of many nations
 - Kings will shut their mouths because of him
 - What was not told they see:
 - What they hadn't heard they understand

Rejected by Men (Isaiah 53.1-3)

- This Servant and His ministry will be difficult to believe (vs. 1)
 - The ministry of the 'army of the Lord' will be revealed but to who?
 - For He will grow up as a young plant, a root from dry ground
 - He had no form or majesty that others should look at him
 - No beauty that he should be desired
 - He was despised and rejected by men
 - Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief
 - One who men hide their faces
 - He was despised and He was not esteemed

Pierced for our Transgressions (Isaiah 53.4-6)

- This servant has borne our griefs
- Carried our sorrows
- Yet we esteemed him stricken
- Smitten by God and afflicted
- He was pierced for our transgressions
- Crushed for our iniquities
- Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace
- With his wounds we are healed
- All we like sheep have gone astray from the path of God (sin)
- And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all

Voluntarily Judged, though Innocent (Isaiah 53.7-9)

- He was oppressed and afflicted
 - YET, he didn't open his mouth

- Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter and a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did
 - not open his mouth
- By oppression and judgment he was taken away
 - His generation considered that he was cut off from the land of the living
 - Stricken for the transgression of my people
 - They made a grave with the wicked
 - And also with a rich man his death
- Yet He did not commit any violence
 - And there was no deceit in His mouth

Out of anguish He is satisfied (Isaiah 53.10-12)

- 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 (rez ?)
 - 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 make many to be accounted righteous
 - He shall bear their iniquities
- Therefore, the Lord will divide him a portion w/ the many
 - He shall divide the spoil with the strong
 - Because he poured out his soul to death
 - He was numbered with the transgressors
 - He was bore the sin of many
 - He makes intercession for the transgressors

Questions

Discussion Starter: Read Isaiah 52.13-53 and try to set the context of how this fits inside the narrative of the book of Isaiah.

In short, this climatic Servant Song reveals Israel's deepest issue is not just physical exile, but spiritual depravity. Israel couldn't hope in its obedience, but it needed someone from the outside. Isaiah is highlighting their greatest need and showing the only solution.

1. As you read this passage, what themes come to the surface.
2. How does the Servant sound like a predictable servant? Compare this with the ways He sounds like a Suffering Servant. How does this bring comfort to your life?

Get the group to dig into the text and discuss the major themes that arise. The ones I see as most prominent are: exaltation, rejection, substitution, and innocence. Though the Servant is/will be exalted, he's also despised and rejected. We should be thankful our God is not immune to the rejection of the world, but entered into it. There is no aspect of our lives that Jesus cannot identify with. He has been tempted as we have been tempted. He suffers as we suffer. This should comfort us that there is no situation in which God is unfamiliar.

Also, notice the Servant (Jesus Christ) is willing. He was not forced to die for our sins, but willingly gave up his back and life (cf. 50:6).

3. Find all 14 of the allusions to substitutionary atonement. What practical applications can we make for ourselves and fellow brothers or sisters? What applications can we make for those who are not yet trusting Christ?

At least 7 references come in verses 4-6. Don't just let this doctrine be a proposition you talk about. Help the group how to think about what it means to apply it to our lives. Get the group to discuss questions like: How does the truth of the atonement help you

when you sin? How would you use this truth to counsel a brother or sister who thinks they cannot approach God because of a recent sin? How would you use this doctrine to help a brother or sister who is weary because they are not performing for God? How would you use this truth to counsel a person who thinks they've "out sinned" God's grace?

Try hard to not let this beautiful truth be a stale statement. Bring it into the depths of our lives revealing God's immense, lavish love for us.

4. How does this passage reveal the seriousness of our sin? What implication does this have in our lives?
5. How does this passage reveal the love of God? The power of God? What implication does this have in our lives?
6. How does God make men righteous? What implication does this have in our lives?
7. How does this passage encourage you to live for the glory of God?

Take time to draw out what this passage says about us and God. If our sin required the death of Jesus Christ, God's own eternal, innocent Son, then our sin must be great. We cannot look at another person and say we are better.

The cross reveals the depth of God's love and power – he is loving enough to send his Son to die for our sins; he is powerful enough to raise him from the dead securing our salvation.

The cross reveals our righteousness comes not from what we do, but who we are in Christ. God's grace is not conditioned upon our performance. We should help each other rest in this grace.

Accountability: In what way are you living in the benefits of the substitutionary atonement of Christ? Are there ways you might be abusing His grace?