

OURS IS NO FAIR WEATHER REDEMPTION

Palm Sunday - March 29th, 2026 - 10 a.m.

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IPAD TEXT - 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. [8] 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? [9] 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.”

Why would Christian people gather on a day like this and study a text about rejection, suffering, death, and burial? We are a few weeks into spring. Especially after the winter we've had, it is just nice to begin to feel the breeze without worrying about frost bite. It's good to talk about the gardens soon softening up. The Jays are back in action. The sun is up when you get out of bed. You start to think about cleaning up the barbecue and eating outdoors. Garage sales are popping up. The robins are back and singing again. And yes, the golf courses are drying out and greening up. Everywhere you look, this is a season of fresh beginnings and new starts. Everything starts to smell of hope.

And there are many people who try to capitalize on all of this when they address the truths of the Easter season. Images of tulips, Easter bunnies and colored eggs abound. Even much of the church finds it easy to link these pictures of spring and freshness and life with the truths of redemption and resurrection.

And yet, like it or not, this is not the approach of the Scriptures. There is little poetry when the doctrines of redemption are considered. And I would maintain there is good reason for the stark, unromanticized realism of blunt, hard accounts like our text this morning. However wonderful springtime is, it is also fleeting and temporary. Spring passes. Next winter is already in the wings, waiting to turn skies grey and temperatures cold.

My point is we need more than a **springtime** Jesus. We need more than a divine, smiley, toothy, pal of a Jesus in this dark, suffering, fallen wintertime world. We need a hope that can stand when winter comes to your health, when winter comes to your marriage, when it comes to your finances, when it comes to your soul. It may work on TV to smile in some beautiful cathedral and pratter about how **“something good is going to happen to you today!”** But it is also true that many times very bad things happen.

This fallen world and our sinful hearts need more than a Hollywood, easy-to-market religion. We need more than a **springtime promotional Jesus**. We need a strong, everlasting, winter-defeating, grave-conquering, God-guaranteed Redeemer, who was a man of sorrows and **acquainted** with grief who can take the worst in our lives and souls and still make all things new. You and I need to know the suffering, yet prospering Servant of the Lord from Isaiah 53.

Hide these three truths deeply in your soul today. They are the only ultimate source for eternal hope and joy:

1) **JESUS, THE SERVANT OF THE LORD, KNOWS ALL ABOUT SUFFERING, REJECTION, AND THE BLEAKEST OF THE SOUL'S WINTERS**

IPAD TEXT - Isaiah 53:7 - “*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.*”

Four things are stated about Jesus' suffering in this one verse. We tend to read them far too quickly. Think about each painful step with me this morning:

- a) ***He was “oppressed.”*** The most common picture of that word in the Old Testament is found in the way masters ***oppressed*** their slaves. They made them make more bricks without straw. They gave them inadequate food and water. They pushed them into more intense labor when their backs where already beaten and bloody from the rod.

This is the picture of **oppression** in the Scriptures. It's being pushed and pressed beyond the breaking point. It's being abused without any kind of defense or recourse. This is the picture of the constant pressure and stress and misery inflicted on Jesus by His enemies. They never let up on Him for a minute. Jesus knew what it was like to live in the vice of hatred, envy and oppression. Following Jesus was never about popularity. It wasn't for Jesus. And it won't be for you.

Our text says we need to remember that Jesus was **oppressed**. There is a whole movement trying to make Jesus the model for everything from positive thinking to successful dieting. He's been remade into the spokesperson for every positive marketing scheme known to man. And I'm sure that Jesus wasn't glum or morose or miserable. But there's something that needs equal billing in this plastic, syrupy age of ours. Jesus was **known** as a "**man of sorrows and acquainted with grief**"(Isaiah 53:3).

In other words, this is what **marked** Jesus. There isn't one single reference in the whole New Testament to Jesus ever laughing. Have you thought of that? There are references to His tears. There are several to His sorrow. There are even a few to His raw anger. So it's not that His emotional life was off limits to the gospel recorders. The gospels describe the emotional life of Jesus, all right. But there isn't a mention of Jesus smiling. Not once. It's not easy living life "**oppressed.**"

- b) **He was "afflicted."** We tend to immediately think of this as **physical** suffering, but actually, the word usually doesn't emphasize that in Old Testament prophetic usage. It is a word used in the Old Testament to refer to **humiliation**. It means to be **treated with contempt**, to be **brought low through scorn and ridicule**. They **spat** on Jesus.

Perhaps the closest picture we could come up with would be to describe someone as being "**devastated.**" It means that Jesus wasn't just lightly attacked - like Superman being attacked by children. All of this "**oppression**" didn't just run off Jesus' back. It hurt Jesus deeply. It reached His soul. Not in a way that produced **hatred** or **bitterness**, but a devastating pain that left Him truly **afflicted**.

- c) **He was “led like a lamb to slaughter.”** The slaughter doesn’t come until verse 8. Here He is just **led** to the slaughter. This is the pain of knowing what is coming - being **led** to the slaughter. I worked for Olympic Packers when I was in College in Saskatoon. I worked a whole summer on what’s affectionately known as the **“kill floor.”** I’ve seen animals led to slaughter. But they didn’t know what was coming. Jesus **did**. And that is a terrifying thing to live with.

It’s quite a thing entirely to live, not just a few moments, or even days, facing something like your own slaughter, but your whole adult life. There was nothing light or breezy about this for Jesus. He was just as fully man as God. He knew why He had come. He lived life on the kill floor, only **knowing** full well what was coming.

- d) **He was like a “sheep before its shearers....” “Sheared.”** That’s quite a picture for the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. The image is carefully chosen. No one was ever **stripped of more than Jesus**. It wasn’t just His clothes. He was stripped of the Father’s presence (**“My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?”**). He was stripped of all the support of His friends - not one at a time, but all at once. Have you ever lost a close friend? Have you ever been stripped of **all** of them at once? That kind of loneliness is oppressive.

He was stripped of His honor, His supreme and shining dignity. In John's gospel Jesus described this dignity as the ***“glory he had with the Father.”*** He was stripped of divine protection. So many times He faced incredible opposition with the confident knowledge that His ***“time had not yet come.”*** He anchored His life in the love and care of Father God. Now all that was removed from Him.

I say it again, no one has ever been stripped of more than Jesus was on Golgotha that first Good Friday. And look at the ***response*** of Jesus to all this. It's in the very same verse:

IPAD TEXT - Isaiah 53:7 - “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.”

Three times in one verse we see the same truth - ***“....yet He did not open His mouth,” “....like a sheep that before its shearers is silent....,” “....so He did not open His mouth.”***

This was all fulfilled in the trial and crucifixion of Jesus with mind-bending accuracy. **First**, at a mock trial, in the middle of the night, at the house of Caiaphas, when Jesus was accused by false witnesses, Caiaphas asked, **“Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?” [63] But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, ‘I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God’”(Matthew 26:62-63) - IPAD TEXT**

Second, later, early in the morning, Pilate was amazed at the Roman headquarters that Jesus still made no response to his words: **“And Pilate again asked him, ‘Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you.’ [5] But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed”(Mark 15:4-5) - IPAD TEXT**

Finally, when Pilate sent Jesus on to Herod, Luke tells us that Herod, **“...questioned him at some length, but he made no answer”(Luke 23:9) - IPAD TEXT**

Why does all of this matter? Why make so much of the fact that Jesus made no response to His accusers and interrogators? Does His silence make Jesus any more holy or righteousness? Perhaps not, but there is something else happening here that is vitally important.

Why was Jesus silent? Was He just drawing a blank when these questions came? Was He just tired or stressed out? No. There is something much more important going on here. What we're witnessing, first hand, when we read of the silence of the Lamb, is Jesus' own **self-awareness that He was the Suffering Servant of prophetic promise - Isaiah 53:10 - "Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him...."** - IPAD TEXT

Jesus knew His death wasn't strictly in human hands. The people weren't the power players they thought they were. Jesus knew the **plan** and **purpose** of His death - the **meaning** of it - in advance.

In other words - and this is very important - the meaning of the death of Jesus wasn't something **read back into the events** by the early church, as some claim. Jesus Himself **knew** this prophecy. Jesus Himself **knew** His own calling. He was the Servant of the Lord. He was the Messiah.

- 2) **JESUS, THE SERVANT OF THE LORD, DIED A DEATH THAT DESERVES TO BE "CONSIDERED" BY ALL PEOPLES**

IPAD TEXT - Isaiah 53:8 - “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?”

He wasn't just *led* to the slaughter. He was *slaughtered*. There was no escape made for Him. There was no relief. There was no way out.

Now, it's important that this verse be read properly. It's important, as you say the words of this verse in your own mind as you read it, that you say the words with the proper tone and inflection, or you will miss their point. The words of this verse form a *question*, not a *statement*.

That's the reason for the question mark at the end of **verse 8**. And the question is, “*Who is considering the full impact of this death?*”. This death, more than any other death, needs to be examined, pondered, clearly understood. So much is at stake that this death mustn't be sentimentalized. We're being haunted by the ghost of Isaiah and the present Spirit of the Lord to think Good Friday through very carefully.

This is the issue of the passage. This is the **primary issue** of Good Friday. The question implies that we have this endless capacity to **miss seeing** the meaning of the biggest events. We have a tendency **not to consider, not to meditate on things most important**. We're too conditioned by thirty second commercials and sound bites. We don't want to read the book unless we can have it in the graphic novel edition.

Graphic novels. When we were kids we used to call those **comic books**, and my parents considered them a waste of money by the small-minded. We have a stronger craving for **light** truths than **deep** and **heavy** ones. We want entertainment - YouTube - not theology. And all of that brings an incredible **dullness of mind** to the deepest spiritual truths!

And fuzzy, old, bearded Isaiah would come running down the aisle of this comfortable sanctuary this morning, screaming at the top of his lungs, **"Who is considering this slain lamb? Who is giving this death enough freight and weight in his mind and heart? Yes He died. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities!"**

Stop and ponder the great things of God. Consider them deeply. Drink them in. Don't hear without hearing. Squeeze the trivia out of your souls. Come to Jesus, the Lamb of God because only He takes away the sins of the world.

3) **THE BURIAL OF THE SLAIN LAMB - A PICTURE OF A MISSION ACCOMPLISHED**

IPAD TEXT - Isaiah 53:9 - "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."

This is a fascinating verse. It gives a hint of the truth stated flat out in verses 10 and 11. But let's start in verse 9. Why does the prophet go to such great lengths to tell us this little detail about the burial of Jesus? Seven hundred years later we read these words from Matthew's gospel:

IPAD TEXT - Matthew 27:57-60 - “When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. [58] He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. [59] And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud [60] and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away.”

So, true enough, the prophecy came to pass. But why does it matter? I like to think it matters because it is the **first clue** that this is all going to turn out better than one might think. True, it’s not the final, or most compelling note in the triumph song of Easter, but it is, perhaps, the very first note - just the **prelude** to a marvelous coming victory. There’s an unstoppable sun just poking its head upon the horizon. The sky is just starting to glow.

This clue in Isaiah’s words comes out a bit more clearly in the **NASB**. Look very carefully at the details - **Isaiah 53:9 - “His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.” - IPAD TEXT**

Did you see it? Notice how the words from Isaiah make a distinction between the place **assigned** for burial and the actual **place** of Jesus' burial: "**His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet [or "But"] He was with a rich man in His death, Because [Here's the reason for the change] He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.**"

In other words, He didn't end up in His **assigned** place. Most criminals - especially those who were executed by crucifixion - didn't even **get** a proper burial. To die on a cross was such a disgrace that it was reserved for the dregs of humanity. And these people didn't get nice memorials.

But Jesus didn't end up in this kind of assigned place. The text says He didn't end up there because He wasn't a criminal. In other words, the place of His burial **backs up** the fact that He was the spotless Lamb of God, wounded for **our** transgressions, not **His**. It all supports the fact that He didn't die for **His** guilt at all. He died for **ours**. And the place of His burial was the very **first** sign that the **great reversal was now underway**. Father God was starting - just **starting** - but starting none the less, to vindicate and magnify the Name of His Son, Jesus Christ, the Suffering Servant.

The great humiliating work of redemption was now complete. That had to come first. The fruit of that great reversal was now starting to blossom. The full accomplishment was still to come, powerfully and beautifully predicted in two of the most triumphant verses in the whole Bible. I've saved them for the final words of this message. To hear them with full consideration and understanding is to have a faith that is explosively powerful, God guaranteed, and fully winter-proof in every sense of the word - even the final winter of death and the grave:

IPAD TEXT - Isaiah 53:10-11 - "Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him [No wonder He could answer nothing to Herod and Pilate]; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. [11] Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many [2.4 billion and counting!] to be accounted righteous [Notice, "accounted righteous." This isn't their *own* righteousness. The righteousness of Jesus *credited* to their own unworthy selves], and he shall bear their iniquities."

O how we need to ponder these great, loving, redeeming words! Let them flame up again in your heart today.