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The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 52:13-53:12(53:6)

"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

This passage is a very powerful and heart moving passage. It is often referred to as "suffering servant" passage. It is a testimony to the sacrificial suffering of an innocent servant who is despised and rejected by people, but who ultimately bears the sins of others and brings salvation to those who believe in him. We Christians believe that this is a prophetic description of Jesus Christ. We all, like sheep, have gone astray in our sins. In this passage we will learn who this servant is, why he had to go through these terrible sufferings, and what his suffering means to us today. The sufferings of the blameless Jesus reveal both God's justice and righteousness against sin, and amazingly the immeasurable and deep love of God. May the Holy Spirit open our hearts today to receive the message of the cross this morning. Amen!

Let us look at Isaiah 52:13, **"See, my servant will act wisely¹; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted."** The passage begins by introducing a servant who will act wisely, be raised and lifted up and be highly exalted. This is so wonderful and good to our ears. We would like to associate with this servant. In our state of despair and oppression we need this servant who would act wisely according to the will of God. This servant described here is Jesus, the Christ. Let us see what would become of Him before He is exalted.

See 52:14, **"Just as there were many who were appalled at him²—his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness"** We see that this servant will be disfigured beyond any human likeness. Meaning if you look at this man you would find it hard to tell if he is human or not. *Jesus would be mistreated and harmed as though an animal.* This is the result of the kind of gruesome sufferings Jesus will go through.

What is the main reason for Jesus to suffer this much? Was it just for Him to be used for entertainment? Certainly not. Even though the people felt that they were right in mistreating and killing Jesus, there was an invisible will of God at work. Look at verse 52:15, **"so he will sprinkle many nations,³ and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand."** Here we see that Jesus will cleanse many of their impurities, that is sin. We see that He will give them a changed heart that desires God. A heart that desires to worship God and please God, a heart to follow God's decrees and law. Many have turned away from God because of sin. Sin lives in every mankind's heart. Yes, in every man, sin dwells, and therefore there is a dire need to be cleaned and delivered from sin.

However, it remains a mystery. The work of God through Jesus the suffering servants is somehow difficult to understand nor believe. The prophet Isaiah, along with the spirit of God's faithful servants including the Apostles in the New Testament, ask this question: Who has believed this message? Look at verse 53:1, **"Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"** Indeed, this a very fundamental question that searches the hearts of men. We read in **John 12:37 Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him.** Why is it that we find it hard to believe? There are many reasons, however the root cause is sin. Sin has darkened our hearts that though seeing we do not perceive, and though hearing we do not understand. Our hearts are darkened and even though the light we are naturally inclined to choosing darkness. This is the reason we cannot choose God. Indeed, the scripture says, **"No one can come to me unless the father who sent me draws them."** I pray that through the studying of scripture, God's Holy Spirit may draw us to believing this

message. May the Holy Spirit open our hearts to believe that Jesus, suffered in other to "sprinkle many nations", even our hearts, from sin. Amen!

Let us see one of the logical reasons why no one has believed the message about Jesus. Jesus was sent to this world by the Father, born in a manger and growing before mankind like any other human being. Look at verse 53:2, **"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."** Yes, can you believe it? Jesus, who is God, became a baby and grew up in the humblest of states. He was vulnerable and needed the protection from his parents Joseph and Mary. He grew up in a place like a desert where no one expects anything good to grow. There was nothing in His appearance that we should desire him.

Because of unbelief, Jesus was despised, mistreated, and rejected by mankind. Look at verse 53:3, **"He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem."** I am sure people expected that perhaps a Messiah should be One who displayed all the forms of glory; strength, power, wealth and most importantly being served instead of being a servant. We see here that Jesus was not all these. How can one want to associate with this Him? That is why he was held in low esteem, rejected and despised by mankind. I believe we can now understand why prophet Isaiah asked, "who has believed our message", this is the message about the suffering servant Jesus who is to cleanse many nations.

Have you ever wondered why is Jesus suffered this way? What could He have done?

Verse 53:4-5, **"Surely, he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. ⁵But 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."**

Here, prophet Isaiah explains that the servant's suffering is not due to his own wrongdoing, but rather, it is for the sins of others. The servant is described as wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, and punished so that we might have peace and be healed. This implies that we deserved this punishment. We deserve to be crushed and be judged harshly. Meaning that the servant however is sacrificing himself so that we don't get punished. God declared that the wage of sin is death! Yes, as sinners we deserve to feel the full wrath of God against sin, and ultimately die. Sin wounds us. It cripples us so that we cannot live like we were supposed to be. It makes us not to acknowledge God or even give Him the worship that He is worth. The servant will however heal us from this disease caused by sin. However, many thought he was dying for his sins. That they considered him stricken and afflicted by God. They thought they were fine and need no punishment, but he was dying for them.

Now, one may ask, why do I need a servant to die for me? 53:6, **"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."**

In Isaiah 53:6, the prophet makes it clear that like sheep we have gone astray, (all of us) and we have turned to our own way. Sheep are vulnerable animals, they need guidance and care, and they dependent on the shepherd for protection, provision, and direction. Sheep cannot guide themselves. When they turn to their own way they get into trouble. They are so fragile and have no means to protect themselves against wild animals. The prophet says we are like sheep. We have no means of protecting ourselves, providing for ourselves and even directing ourselves. We need to be like David and say, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside

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still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake," We need the Lord to guide us. However, Isaiah says it clearly, we have gone to our own way.

When we go our own way, we call the wrath of God upon ourselves. Romans 1:18 says, "**The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness,**" All the people who have chosen not to honor God and have suppressed the truth about God in their wicked hearts deserve the wrath of God. All the people who are not righteous in the sight of God deserve the wrath of God. They are all like sheep who have gone astray. Romans 3:10 says, "**10 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one;"**" This implies that everyone including me, and you have gone astray. We all have fallen short of the glory of God. And as such we deserve the wrath of God.

I grew up obeying my parents. I would obey my teachers and go to school on time. I made sure I left school on time and performed my duties at home before going to spend some time with my friends. To top on that I went to church every Sunday. Even though I grew up in a place filled with so much godlessness I seemed to be a little light in my community.

This made it hard for me to see that I am a sinner. I struggled to understand why the scripture would say I am a sinner. However, when I was doing my first year at wits. I struggled a lot with sin. I started lusting on females. Since I was smart, I would spend a lot of weeks without studying. I would wake up and wait for my roommates to go to school and start watching sexual content on my phone. Daily I was falling deep and deep into this. I tried everything to stop but it was too difficult to stop. To top on that I was drifting away from God. I would spend months without studying the scriptures. This continued for the rest of 2018. I was powerless, to stop myself.

However, in 2019 I started studying the bible at res with my friends and I would study the bible with Shepherd Daniel each week. I realized during these bible studies that the reason I couldn't do the right thing even if I wanted was because I am a sinner. Sin does not come because of what I am doing or not doing. It is an issue of the nature of mankind. I was born a sinner. After this understanding I raised up my hands and cried out to God and accepted that I am sinner and I need his Son Jesus.

This didn't end here even though I sing in the worship team, I do bible studies and write testimony, I do bible studies with brother Kwanele and I stay with the brothers in the bible house. Many times, I find myself struggling with sin. I am not always committed in my bible studies with brother Kwanele. Sometimes, I find myself idle and watching some YouTube clips with woman who are not wearing properly the whole day. Sometimes I am very selfish. I have not been considerate of my brothers and have left the room dirty many times without caring how they feel about this. I pack instruments sometimes with a bent heart as if I am serving anyone in this church. I have turned into my own way. I am a sinner, and I deserve to suffer like Jesus suffered, and die. I need Jesus to save me.

We cannot save ourselves, but God so loved us that He gave his only Son to carry the iniquity of us all upon Himself. Do you see now? This is the will and wisdom of God that through Him, He would punish sin because he is a just God and he would still forgive sinners like me and you. Jesus obeyed God even unto death so that me and you can be forgiven. It was God's way, look at 53:7, "**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 its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.**"

He did not open his mouth or even protest. This shows us that he was very obedient. He willingly took our iniquities upon himself. He did not even open his mouth but like a lamb He obeyed the will of His father. He wanted to save us.

Look at 53:8,9, "**By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people, he was punished. 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.**"

This shows us that Jesus indeed suffered greatly because of our sins and eventually died and was buried. He was taken like a criminal and was killed for our transgression. He was assigned a grave with the wicked as if he was a wicked man.

When we look at the suffering of Jesus Christ what do we see?

We understand firstly, God's righteousness. God's righteousness refers to His perfect and Holy nature. God's righteousness says that sin and a sinner must be punished. His righteousness is also associated with His justice, where He judges according to His standard.

Jesus lived among us perfectly and without sin. He always did what was right, obeying God's commandments and fulfilling His will in every way. He lived a life of perfect love, compassion, and absolute obedience to God. This is how we ought to live. This is God's standard for everyone. However, we have not met that standard because of sin, and therefore we deserve to be punished.

Jesus, though perfect, like a lamb without blemish had to suffer to meet God's requirements against sin. God had to crush him and cause him to suffer. He became a substitutionary sacrifice for us. This was the only way that a sinner like you and I can be forgiven. God had to lay the sins of us all upon Him. In Romans 6:23a, "**For the wages of sin is death;**" This means that when our sins had been laid on Him, God's wrath had to fall on him, He was oppressed, afflicted, He was led to slaughter, and He died on the cross.

Secondly, we see the love of God.

What manner of love is this? This is the great love of God. He willingly gave his only son for us. Jesus took upon Himself the punishment that we deserved and made it possible for us to be reconciled to God and become righteous by faith in Him. Because of Jesus we are now spared from the wrath of God, and given a new life and a new identity as genuine sons and daughters of God. We can now come to God without shame and guilt to worship Him. This is only possible when we believe and hold on to Jesus. We did not deserve to be loved in this manner, but God did it in Jesus, and this love of God is available today to anyone who believes in Jesus who suffered for their sins.

In conclusion, after suffering for our sins, Jesus eventually died and was buried in the tomb. We will learn from this Sunday's message how God raised him from the dead with power and the hope we have in His resurrection. Now then, as we write our testimonies let us reflect on whether we have believed this message about Jesus. Do you understand how much of a sinner you are? Do you understand that you deserve to be punished for your sins? Are you ready to repent and come to God? Are you ready to receive this great love of God?

I pray that we may all realize that we are sinners and come to God with repentant hearts and accept His love. I pray that we may seek God daily in scripture and that the Holy Spirit may continually lead us to Jesus Christ as we do so.