

Text: Isa 52.13-53.12

What is the purpose of a sermon? The sermon is meant to get you to do something.

What is the purpose of a Bible study? The Bible study is meant to get you to think something.

Of course, a sermon should get you to think also, but it has the added thrust of challenging your will in some way.

Our Christmas series, taking us through the Servant Songs of Isaiah isn't meant to challenge our outward actions so much as our inner spirit. These sermons are a call to worship.

We are self-centered creatures. It is not that we should never think of ourselves, and take care of ourselves, but that spiritually, in our human nature, our issue with self is that we tend to idolize ourselves when we should be worshipping our God, submitting to his ways, and living for him.

Today we come to our last message in the Servant Song series. Again, we are calling you to worship the Lord's Servant.

The Career of the Servant (2): Behold My Servant

We are taking that title right from the first line of the last Servant song.

Last week, we focused on the voice of the Remnant in Isa 53.1-9. We will touch on that again, but the bulk of our time will be on the sections that represent (mostly) the voice of God, and the way he looks at the Servant.

By definition, God is always right in what he says and thinks. His viewpoint is the only viewpoint that matters. You need to align your viewpoint with his viewpoint. When God thinks something, it is truth. When you think what God thinks, it is worship.

Read Isa 52.13-53.12

Proposition: Your only appropriate attitude towards Jesus is worship.

I. The shock of His prosperity (52.13-15)

A. A royal announcement: "Behold, my Servant..." (13)

"The first section consists of verses 13-15 of chapter 52, and may be described as God's *Ecce Homo*. In it God introduces

His Servant, and seeks to direct the attention of all men to Him.”¹

1. When Pilate said, “*Ecce Homo*” (Behold the man!) it was a term of mockery
2. When God says, Behold my Servant, it is a royal announcement
God means for us to look on the Servant with favour.
3. In the first Servant Song, the Lord begins with this line:

Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, *in whom* my soul delighteth; (KJV)

B. The prosperity of the servant (13)

1. Variations in translation
 - a. Some trans. will have some variation on “my servant shall deal prudently” or “wisely”
 - b. The root does mean “act wisely” — but wise action is always prosperous

“השכל” by itself means simply to gain, prove, or act with intelligence; and then, since intelligent action, as a rule, is also effective, it is used as synonymous with ... to act with result, *i.e.*, so as to be successful.”²

2. Superlatives indicating success
 - a. He will be high
 - b. He will be lifted up
 - c. He will be greatly exalted

Isa 6.1 ¶ In the year of King Uzziah’s death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.

¹ David Baron, *The Servant of Jehovah: The Sufferings of the Messiah and the Glory That Should Follow; an Exposition of Isaiah LIII* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 51.

² Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 304.

Isa 33.10 “Now I will arise,” says the LORD, “Now I will be exalted, now I will be lifted up.

Phil 2.9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

Bold claim! “Thus the Servant would take a place of equality with God...”³

C. Astonishing turn of events (14-15)

1. A comparison is introduced in v. 14

a. “Just as”

b. Completed by “so” or “thus” (14, 15)

The translators have difficulty here. The NAU adds “my people” in italics, as if “you” refers to “my people”

c. Part of the problem: the switch from second person “you” to third person “he” in the rest of the passage

To skip the lengthy technicalities of the commentaries, I will conclude that “you” is addressed to “my servant” and then God turns to talking about “my servant” — “he, his, him”

2. The astonishment of the many

a. God introduces “my servant” with exalted terms as we have seen

b. “The many” are astonished: “*this guy?*”

Meaning: “**be appalled**, horrified, terrified, dismayed, i.e., have an emotion or attitude of horror and great fear, implying also dismay and discouragement”⁴

³ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Isa 52.13.

⁴ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

c. The reason for astonishment: his appearance

- The beatings and tortures of the cross surely marred his appearance

One commentator: ““This does not mean that he appears to be more disfigured than other men, but that his disfigurement was so great that he no longer appeared as a man.”⁵

d. Even more important: the terms intensify the meaning, emphasizing that “His sufferings would be extremely great.”⁶

e. Who are “the many”?

- 1) We hear their voice, at least some of them in Isa 52.1-9, the repentant remnant
- 2) All Israel looks at him and says, “*this guy?*”

3. Yet as astonishing as his appearance is, in equal proportion the nations are astonished another way (13)

a. His work will “sprinkle” many nations (effects of appearance)

“The verb *he shall sprinkle* is a technical word, found in the Mosaic law for the sprinkling of oil, water, or blood as a cleansing or purifying rite.”⁷

b. Indeed, kings will shut their mouths

- 1) Kings are authorities in their lands; when they speak, people listen
- 2) When they see him, and what he did, they shut their mouths

If you can picture it, these kings are seeing the suffering Servant with new eyes... hands go to mouths... they stand... they bow... they bow to the ground: king of kings is this Servant!

⁵ Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1977), 337.

⁶ Constable, *Expository Notes*, Isa 52.14.

⁷ Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3:338.

Phil 2.10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

II. The chorus of sinners' dismay (53.1-9)

Briefly here, as we covered these verses last week

- A. We thought he deserved his suffering
- B. We found that he suffered in place of us
- C. We realized we deserved the suffering
- D. And when we turned to him, who bore our sins, he took our sins away

“By these strong words and expressions the Spirit of God seeks to give us a glimpse into the depth and intensity of the vicarious sufferings of our Saviour, and of the greatness of the cost of our redemption; and as we contemplate this picture of the Man of Sorrows, with the ‘face’ which for us was ‘marred’ more than that of any man, and with His form bowed and disfigured more than the sons of men, may our hearts be stirred with shame and sorrow for the sin which was the cause of it all, and with greater love and undying gratitude to Him who bore all this for us!”⁸

III. The means of His glory (53.10-12)

- A. The voice (I take it) of Isaiah: Isa 53.10
 - 1. The supreme *causa efficiens* (efficient cause) of his suffering is the Lord (Delitzsch term)

“But first it is once more reiterated and emphasized that **they were not mere chance experiences** which the Servant of Jehovah passed through.”⁹
 - 2. The suffering was at the pleasure of God
 - a. God (effectively) crushed him
 - b. God (effectively) put him to grief

⁸ Baron, *The Servant of Jehovah*, 60–61.

⁹ Baron, 117.

Not that the Lord is a sadist, but “it was the Lord’s pleasure Himself to bruise the servant.”¹⁰ In other words, it was God’s preference that it be Himself and not someone else.

3. The servant, notice, offered himself as a guilt offering

- a. The whole sacrificial system is representative of the work of the Servant

Delitzsch gives us more Latin

- The burnt offering was *oblatio* – “offering” [sense of obligation and worship]
- The peace offering was *conciliatio* – “reconciliation” “the knitting of fellowship”
- The meal offering was *donatio* – “donation” – a “sanctifying consecration”
- The sin offering was *expatio* – “expiation” – “atonement”
- The trespass (guilt) offering was *satisfactio* – “satisfaction” – that is “a compensation for the wrong done”¹¹

- b. The satisfaction of the debt is the focus in our verse

“*asham* signifies first the guilt or debt, then the compensation or penance, and hence the sacrifice which discharges the debt or guilt and sets the man free.”¹²

4. The offering produced offspring

- a. Interestingly, Jewish commentaries (and some liberal Christians) cast doubt on identifying the Servant as Christ on this point

“Jesus didn’t have any kids.”

¹⁰ Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3:354.

¹¹ Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2:333–34.

¹² Baron, *The Servant of Jehovah*, 120.

b. However:

- 1) He sees his offspring after he is already dead – what does that mean?
- 2) Also, He *sees* his offspring, not He *had* offspring – that means he is now alive

5. And the servant prolongs his days... he lives now, forever

And the Lord prospers all his doings in his hand

B. God picks up the song in verses 11-12

1. Redemption is the consequence of the anguish of his soul (11)

- a. God is satisfied with him
- b. God has ordained that those who know the servant (“by his knowledge”) will be justified
- c. Play on words: the righteous servant will “righteousize” (justify) the many

2. Therefore, God gives him a portion with the great

a. The word portion doesn’t mean, “I’ll dole out a share for you”

- 1) Rather, it is “the appointed portion, the lot, the inheritance.”¹³
- 2) Among the sons of God, he is the chief, and he receives it all

b. What is the extent of his inheritance?

Ps 2.8 ‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance,
And the *very* ends of the earth as Your possession.

KJV Ps 72.8-9, 11 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,
and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

⁹ They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him;
and his enemies shall lick the dust.

¹³ Lindsey, “Servant Songs Part 5,” 35.

¹¹ Yea, all kings shall fall down before him:
all nations shall serve him.

3. The cause of his inheritance:
- He poured out Himself to death
 - He was numbered with the transgressors
 - He Himself bore the sin of many
 - And interceded for the transgressors

Conclusion:

Delitzsch offers this line as he concludes his commentary on the passage:

“Every word stands here as if written beneath the cross on Golgotha.”¹⁴

Proposition: Your only appropriate attitude towards Jesus is worship.

¹⁴ Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2:340.