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The Servant's Incarnation

Isaiah 53.2

Series: The Suffering Servant (Communion Series)

The Village Church

October 3, 2021

I. The Body

- A. We come to a table with a body
 - 1. Yes, we know; the elements of the Lord's Supper, the bread and the cup, represent a body
 - a. They are not actually the body and blood of Jesus
 - 2. But they are not mere metaphors
 - a. They do represent an actual body
 - b. The body of Jesus
- B. **Luke 22:19–20** (NASB95) —
 - 1. 19 And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."
 - 2. 20 And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood."
 - 3. The bread and the cup represent the body and blood of Jesus Christ
 - a. His physical body
- C. That's why the author of Hebrews, quoting the Psalms, makes this statement:
 - 1. **Hebrews 10:5–7** (NASB95) — 5 Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME; 6 IN WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN YOU HAVE TAKEN NO PLEASURE. 7 "THEN I SAID, 'BEHOLD, I HAVE COME (IN THE SCROLL OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME) TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD.' "
- D. Then he says,
 - 1. **Hebrews 10:10** (NASB95) — 10 By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
- E. God the Father gave God the Son a body
 - 1. We call it the incarnation
 - a. Merry Christmas
- F. But what kind of body?
 - 1. What kind of body would best display the eternally begotten Son of God?
 - a. What kind of majesty would we expect to see in the Son of God?
 - b. What kind of beauty would we expect to behold?
 - 2. What kind of body did God prepare for His Son?
- G. Well, it turns out, nothing special

1. An ordinary, human body
 - a. A body subject to all the principles and processes of growth and development
 - b. A body not unlike the mass of bodies in this room at the appropriate stages of life
 - c. A body which could be injured; they say you're not a carpenter unless you've hit your thumb with a hammer; ouch!
 - d. Jesus was a carpenter; He probably said "ouch!" a time or two
 - e. He probably didn't say what I've heard other carpenters say under the same circumstances; but He probably said "ouch!"
2. His body was nothing special
 - a. But it was a body
 - b. A real, physical body

H. Text

1. **Isaiah 53:2** (NASB95) — 2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.

I. This is unlike what we would expect from the incarnation of the Son of God

1. After all, we expect something much more impressive from supposedly impressive people
2. Saul:
 - a. **1 Samuel 9:2** (NASB95) — 2 He had a son whose name was Saul, a choice and handsome man, and there was not a more handsome person than he among the sons of Israel; from his shoulders and up he was taller than any of the people.
 - b. This was a man who turned heads
 - c. A man who captured attention every time he appeared on the scene
 - d. A man who took the oxygen out of the room when he entered
 - e. But he didn't turn out very well, did he?
3. David:
 - a. **1 Samuel 17:42** (NASB95) — 42 ... he was but a youth, and ruddy, with a handsome appearance.
 - b. David convinced Saul that he could throttle Goliath because he had throttled a lion and a bear in his duties as a shepherd
 - c. He must have been strong; physically impressive
 - d. We don't know how David actually looked; we have no photograph of him
 - e. This is how Michelangelo imagined him to be **[statue of David]**
 - f. He's ripped! Less than 7% body fat
4. Wouldn't we expect the incarnate Son of God to be physically impressive?

J. But no

1. "He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him."
2. God gave Him a body

- a. But nothing special
- II. **The Suffering Servant**
- A. Our communion sermon series is entitled The Suffering Servant
 - 1. It is an exposition of Isaiah 53
 - a. Which we have learned actually starts in Isaiah 52 (52.13)
 - b. This is the fifth message in the series
 - 2. Isaiah 53 is one of the Servant of the Lord hymns in Isaiah
 - a. Hymns which tend to be Messianic in character
 - b. In which God provides His Messiah to fulfill the task that the people of Israel have failed to fulfill as His servant
 - c. His Messiah – who lives righteously, fulfilling all of His covenant responsibilities – perfectly; which Israel clearly failed to do
 - d. Messiah who in His life and death provides for the redemption, the salvation of all those who would ever believe in Him
 - e. All those – both Jew and Gentile
 - B. **The Great Exchange**
 - 1. **Isaiah 52:13–14** (NASB95) — 13 Behold, My servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted.
 - 2. 14 Just as many were astonished at you, My people, So His appearance was marred more than any man And His form more than the sons of men.
 - 3. Messiah – once exalted, would be humiliated
 - a. And He would do so for us
 - b. It was the great exchange
 - c. So that we, in our humiliation, might be exalted
 - C. **The Servant's Redemption**
 - 1. **Isaiah 52:15** (NASB95) — 15 Thus He will sprinkle many nations, Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; For what had not been told them they will see, And what they had not heard they will understand.
 - 2. His sprinkling signifies the shedding of His blood to pay for the sins of His people
 - a. The sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifices under the Old Covenant would be blood sprinkled on the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant by the High Priest on the day of atonement
 - b. Such sacrifices would prefigure the sacrificial death of the Servant of the Lord
 - 3. But this Messiah, the Servant of the Lord, would sprinkle, not just for the sins of the Jews, but He would sprinkle many nations
 - a. This was the Servant's Redemption
 - D. **The Servant's Message**
 - 1. **Isaiah 53:1** (NASB95) — 1 Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?
 - 2. Implies great frustration
 - a. That in spite of the this great exchange
 - b. In spite of the extraordinary redemption of many nations

- c. We are struck by how few people are responsive to that glorious gospel message

III. But “Who has believed our message?”

- A. Why the unbelief?
- B. Answer: This Messiah, this Servant of the Lord, this Son of God incarnate
 - 1. He’s not so impressive
- C. **Isaiah 53:2** (NASB95) — 2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.
- D. We don’t pay attention to unimpressive people
 - 1. We don’t notice them
 - 2. We don’t care about them
 - 3. We certainly don’t believe them

IV. His Origin

- A. “Like a tender shoot”
 - 1. Speaks of His birth and growth as a young lad
 - a. He was known by His family and His friends as a kid, as a child, as a teenager
 - b. He was unremarkable in those years
 - c. He was like a tender shoot
 - 2. A shoot, a twig, a suckling, that comes from a branch or from the trunk of a tree
 - a. Drawing its strength from the tree
 - b. But to the arborist, those shoots are useless
 - c. Worse than useless; they sap strength from the tree
 - 3. So this “tender shoot” is expendable
 - a. We cut them off
 - b. Ready for the fire
 - 4. So this baby, born in a stable
 - a. Drew the attention of practically no one
 - b. Angels to be sure!
 - c. They had inside information!
 - d. Shepherds – themselves the expendables of the society; only because of the angels
 - e. The Magi from the east – whom pretty much nobody understood
 - f. But to the innkeeper, to the multitude of people flocking into Bethlehem for the registration
 - g. The displaced mother and father and infant meant nothing
 - 5. And as a youngster, he made little impact
 - a. He was just one of the boys in the neighborhood
 - b. It was true that He had a bit more theological curiosity than the average lad
 - c. There was the episode when he was left behind in Jerusalem, caught up in the adult conversations with the teachers of the law
 - d. But to them, the boy Jesus was just an oddity, a curiosity

- e. Once He was picked up by His parents, he was forgotten
- f. By everyone, it seems, except His mother; who kept such occasions in her heart
- 6. And when He began to teach they couldn't figure Him out
 - a. **Matthew 13:55–56** (NASB95) — 55 “Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? 56 “And His sisters, are they not all with us?”
 - b. He’s just one of us!
- 7. There was nothing special about His origin
 - a. Nothing that would put Him on a watch list
 - b. Nothing that would make Him the “most likely to succeed” in His high school yearbook
- B. **“Like a root out of parched ground”**
 - 1. Refers to His origin in an insignificant family in an insignificant area in an outback portion of a failed nation-state
 - 2. Not compared to the elegant cedars reaching into the sky
 - a. But a root in parched ground
 - b. With little prospect for fruitfulness
 - 3. “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”
- C. His origin was nothing special
 - 1. Just the opposite
 - a. Nothing in his familial or geographic or cultural pedigree that would bear notice

V. **His Appearance**

- A. **“No stately form or majesty”**
 - 1. No David; no Saul
 - a. Whose physical appearances were remarkable
 - 2. But those terms are not restricted in scripture to physical appearance alone
 - a. They also include personality or manner or behavior
 - b. The kinds of characteristics that would generate followers
 - 3. He was not dressed up for the occasion
 - a. The occasion being the coming of the Son of God!
 - 4. Having spent a career in academia, I participated in academic convocations
 - a. Where all the professors and administrators donned their academic regalia – their robes and their stoles and their hoods and their caps and their tassels
 - b. Once or twice a year majesty was in vogue
 - c. And these people who in their classrooms or offices could be mundane or even crass
 - d. Now got dressed up with the pretense of majesty
 - e. And you would hope the students would have the good sense to bow down to them, or at least give them the requisite titles
 - 5. But not with Jesus

- a. There was no form or majesty about Him that would arrest one's attention
 - b. Nothing commensurate with pomp and circumstance
 - c. No orchestra playing Edward Elgar when He entered the city
- B. No "appearance that we should be attracted"
- 1. Or "beauty"
 - 2. There is in the human soul a sense of appreciation of beauty
 - a. Symmetry
 - b. Proportionality
 - c. Relationship in elements
 - d. Consistency
 - e. Texture
 - f. Tone
 - 3. Such that when we see it, whether in nature or in human beings, we are attracted to it
 - 4. But Jesus was not one of the "beautiful people"
 - a. He would not make the cover of Maxim, or Men's Health, or Sports Illustrated or GQ
 - b. He would not be Time Magazine's Man of the Year
 - 5. In appearance He would be under the radar
 - a. That is not to say that He had any special physical defect
 - b. Just that He was like most of His contemporaries
 - c. Just ordinary, mundane – nothing that would make us look twice
- C. So "who has believed our message?"
- 1. Why the unbelief?
 - 2. Because His origins were unremarkable
 - a. No prospects for worldly success
 - 3. Because His appearance was not anything that would gain our notice
 - a. Nothing attractive
 - b. Nothing compelling about His personality or behavior

VI. A Statement About Us

- A. So what does this say about us
 - 1. About us as members of the human race?
 - a. The human race that largely rejects the Savior and the salvation that He condescends to bring?
- B. This Jesus was from the very beginning undervalued
 - 1. 53.3: "we did not esteem Him"
 - 2. He was undervalued at his birth
 - a. His mother shuffled off to a stable to deliver a baby among animals
 - 3. He was undervalued by His community
 - a. Mark 3:21 (NASB95) — 21 When His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, "He has lost His senses."
 - 4. He was undervalued by the religious elite

- a. **Mark 3:22** (NASB95) — 22 The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.”
5. He was undervalued in His death
 - a. **Acts 3:14–15** (NASB95) — 14 “But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses.”
- C. But Jesus Christ continues to be undervalued today
 1. Ray Ortlund: Do not think that if you had been an eyewitness of Jesus, you would have admired him. Not even his miracles made the impact they should have...
 - a. **John 12:37** (NASB95) — 37 But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him...
 2. Ortlund: His own family misjudged him.
 - a. **John 7:5** (NASB95) — 5 For not even His brothers were believing in Him.
 3. Ortlund: When he traveled with his disciples, it wasn’t like the movies. Jesus didn’t have a holy glow about him. The woman at the well had no idea whom she was talking to. Even John the Baptist became uncertain about him.
 4. Ortlund concludes: Our Lord just wasn’t special in ways that count with us.... if we’d been there, every one of us would have despised and rejected him and turned away to follow after really cool people like Barabbas or Caiaphas or Pilate, depending on our politics or maybe even just our mood at the moment. That’s who we are. When the only true remedy for the guilt that tortures us and threatens us with eternal destruction appeared right in front of us, our emotions were dead, our decisions misguided, our minds corrupted.
- D. Such is the state of unbelievers; by nature unbelievers disesteem or undervalue Jesus Christ
 1. But what about us?
 - a. Us believers?
 - b. Yes, even we disesteem our Savior; we undervalue our Savior
 2. To the extent to which the residue of unbelief continues in us – and it most certainly does to one degree or another – we disesteem the Lord Jesus
 - a. Father of the demon-possessed son: “I do believe; help my unbelief”
- E. How is it that we undervalue Christ?
 1. When we don’t obey Christ on Christ’s own terms we devalue Him
 2. When we make anything the equal to Christ
 - a. When we prefer anything over following Jesus
 3. When we fail to make use of His resources to meet our every need
 - a. Physical
 - b. Spiritual
 - c. Emotional

4. When we seek our happiness in anything or anyone other than in Jesus
 5. When we do all of those things we undervalue our Savior
- F. What must we do with such unbelief?
1. **Acknowledge our sin** of unbelief, of undervaluing the Christ
 - a. Mourn for our lack of esteem of Him
 - b. Long for a greater estimate of His precious superiority
 - c. You may have many sins for which you would mourn
 - d. At the root of all of them, almost certainly, is undervaluing the Christ
 - e. **Philippians 3:8** (NASB95) — 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ...
 - f. Confess your lack of esteem of the One who so condescended to be humiliated in the world's estimation
 - g. And so receive the forgiveness that is promised by the scriptures:
 - h. **1 John 1:9** (NASB95) — 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
 2. **Examine yourselves**
 - a. **Psalm 139:23–24** (NASB95) — 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; 24 And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.
 - b. **2 Corinthians 13:5** (NASB95) — 5 Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! ...
 - c. Allow the Spirit of God to explore your hearts to see how you may be undervaluing your Lord Jesus
 - d. Examining oneself is what we ought to do every time we come to this table
 - e. **1 Corinthians 11:28** (NASB95) — 28 But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.
 3. **Make Jesus Christ the supreme object of your personal study**
 - a. Immerse yourself in the scriptures; see how they all point to the Messiah, the Servant of the Lord, the incarnate Son of God
 - b. **Colossians 1:15–17** (NASB95) — 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.
 - c. See in Christ alone His excellency, His supremacy, His grace
 - d. Contemplate His suffering on your behalf; consider what His suffering means for your well-being

- e. **Romans 8:32** (NASB95) — 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

VII. **The Significance of the Incarnation**

- A. This passage is about the incarnation; Jesus Christ coming in the flesh
 - 1. The Father sending His Son
 - 2. Giving Him a body
 - 3. Making Him the once-for-all sacrifice for the sin of all those who would ever believe in Him
- B. The incarnation is central to our redemption
 - 1. Without the incarnation, there is no redemption
- C. Great irony
 - 1. The very condescension of our Lord Jesus
 - a. His humble origins
 - b. His ordinary appearance
 - c. His lack of attractiveness
 - 2. These very elements which hide the Son of God from the unbelieving world
 - a. Which are the root of the disregard and unbelief our world has toward the Lord Jesus
 - 3. These very elements are the basis for our redemption
- D. **Philippians 2:7–8** (NASB95) — 7 but [He] emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
- E. He had to be made like us so we could be made like Him
- F. **John 1:14** (NASB95) — 14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.
 - 1. We only behold His glory with the eyes of faith
 - 2. Without faith – there is nothing to regard as attractive or compelling
- G. John's assessment of the significance of the incarnation
 - 1. **1 John 4:2–3** (NASB95) — 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.
 - 2. **2 John 7** (NASB95) — 7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.
- H. There is no element of the gospel lacking in Isaiah 53
 - 1. The Servant's Incarnation is central
 - 2. Do you have the eyes of faith to see through ordinariness of His origin and His appearance?