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## **The Servant's Silence**

### **Isaiah 53.7**

#### **Series: The Suffering Servant (Communion Series)**

#### **The Village Church**

**July 3, 2022**

#### I. Introduction

- A. I'm reading through the Bible as I do each year
  - 1. I follow the reading plan that is included with the Study with the Pastor materials – the Scripture Union *Encounter with God* series
  - 2. In that reading plan I find myself at the present time in the book of Job
- B. If you read through the Bible every year, every year you end up reading Job
  - 1. So every about this time I brace myself
    - a. Job is not easy
    - b. It can be a depressing book
    - c. Central to it is the suffering that Job went through
  - 2. 42 chapters; most of it contains discourses between Job and his friends
    - a. Job complains, a lot, that he doesn't deserve what he's receiving
    - b. His friends, well-meaning as they were, try to convince Job that there's something wrong with him that has caused his maladies
    - c. And that if he could only identify what it is, and repent, everything would be fine
  - 3. The friends make excellent theological arguments
    - a. But they misapply it in Job's case
  - 4. Because neither Job nor his friends knew what was behind the curtain
- C. That Job's suffering was the result of a kind of wager in the heavenly realm
  - 1. A wager between God and Satan
  - 2. **Job 1:8** (ESV) — 8 And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?"
  - 3. Satan replies, "He doesn't serve you for nothing. Look at how you've blessed him. Take away all his blessings, and he will curse you to your face."
  - 4. God says, "Ok, you're on. You can take away his possessions and his family, but you can't touch Job"
  - 5. So, you know the story, Satan destroys or steals his property and kills his children
  - 6. But Job remains faithful
    - a. **Job 1:20–22** (ESV) — 20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. 21 And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be

the name of the LORD.” 22 In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

- D. Well then Satan comes back and ups the ante
  - 1. God says, “How ‘bout My man Job! You tried to destroy him without reason, but he still holds fast his integrity.” (Job 2.3)
  - 2. Satan say, “You haven’t touched his skin. All that a man has he will give for his life. You afflict his health and he will curse you to your face” (Job 2.4-5)
  - 3. God says, “Ok, have at him. But you cannot kill him.” (Job 2.6)
  - 4. Then Satan struck Job with sores all over his body
    - a. Job was miserable; he was a pathetic human being
    - b. His wife said to him, “Curse God and die!” (Job 2.9)
  - 5. But in all this Job did not sin with his lips (Job 2.10)
- E. Then the rest of the book unfolds
- F. I say all this to say that there are two really good parts in the book of Job
  - 1. Mostly in terms of the dialogue between Job and his friends
  - 2. One is toward the beginning of the book when Job’s friends show up
  - 3. Job 2:11–13 (ESV) — 11 Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They made an appointment together to come to show him sympathy and comfort him. 12 And when they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him. And they raised their voices and wept, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven. 13 And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.
  - 4. The other is toward the end of the book
    - a. When God shows up
    - b. Job 40:4 (ESV) — 4 “Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth.”
- G. Those are the best moments in the book, in my view
  - 1. Because in both cases both Job and his friends have the good sense to shut up
- H. One of the great maladies of our culture is that we don’t know when to shut up
  - 1. In 1968 the great prophet of our time, Andy Warhol, said “In the future everybody will be world famous for fifteen minutes.”
  - 2. This was, of course, before the rise of social media
    - a. Which appears to have fulfilled his prophecy
  - 3. With Facebook and Twitter and Tik-Tok and YouTube and What’s App and Instagram and Reddit and Snapchat and Pinterest and a bunch of others
    - a. Anybody can think anything and get it out there
    - b. Out there for everybody to see
    - c. And people are automatically famous
    - d. Until their tweet or video or rant stops trending

- e. Then their forgotten
- 4. Until the next time they say something really foolish
  - a. Then they get noticed again
  - b. For a period of time
  - c. For their “fifteen minutes”
- I. That’s why our age is so foolish
  - 1. So many people are saying things
    - a. When they would be better off to shut up
- J. Our text this morning is Isaiah 53.7
  - 1. It is a Messianic text; refers to the Servant of Yahweh – the Messiah
  - 2. **Isaiah 53:7** (ESV) — 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.
  - 3. If there was anyone who deserved to tweet or to post a video on YouTube or to chat on SnapChat or to rant on Facebook – it is the Messiah
  - 4. And yet – He opened not His mouth
- K. The Jews of old could not understand this text
  - 1. They couldn’t bear to think that their Messiah would suffer
    - a. So when Jesus appeared on the scene and went to the cross
    - b. And when He had opportunity to defend Himself, He was silent
    - c. He refused to speak
  - 2. But Jesus understood this text
    - a. And both Jesus and Isaiah were much greater prophets than Andy Warhol
    - b. And Jesus knew He was headed to suffering, to the cross
    - c. And He said as much to His disciples on multiple occasions
    - d. The disciples – who didn’t understand it either

## II. **The Servant’s Review**

- A. In our communion series – when we take a break from the Gospel of John – we’ve been examining Isaiah 53
  - 1. That great Servant of the Lord hymn
    - a. One of four
    - b. Most of which have Messianic implications
    - c. And point to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ
- B. Isaiah 53, as you have learned, begins in Isaiah 52
  - 1. There are five stanzas
    - a. 52.13-15
    - b. 53.1-3
    - c. 53.4-6
    - d. 53.7-9
    - e. 53.10-12
- C. We’ve learned how the title “Servant of the Lord” originally was designated for Israel
  - 1. But because of the failure of Israel to fulfill their covenant responsibilities

- a. God provided another Servant of the Lord
  - b. One who would fulfill the holy and righteous commands of Almighty God
  - c. And in so doing would provide salvation for all those who would believe in Him
- D. We learned that this hymn in Isaiah 53 contains, as James Durham, the Scottish pastor who preached 72 sermons on Isaiah 53 explained back in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, the marrow of the gospel; the essence of the gospel
- 1. We learned about the **Great Exchange**
    - a. How the Servant of God would substitute for all those who would believe in Him
  - 2. We learned about the **Redemption** that the Servant provided
    - a. How He purchased His people out of the slave market of sin
  - 3. We learned about the **Message** of the Servant
    - a. The gospel message that was ignored and rejected by the very people for whom it was intended
  - 4. We learned about the **Incarnation** of the Servant
    - a. How He came to earth and became a human being
    - b. So He could save human beings
  - 5. We learned about the nature of the **Sorrows** of the Servant
    - a. A topic we'll revisit this morning
  - 6. We learned about the Servant's **Substitution**
    - a. How He bore our sin as He went to the cross
  - 7. And we learned about the Servant's **Burden**
    - a. How God laid on the Servant all of the iniquity of all those who would ever believe in Him
- E. And now we come to v. 7
- 1. And consider **The Servant's Silence**
    - a. How in the face of oppression and affliction
    - b. He opened not His mouth
- F. Text
- 1. **Isaiah 53:7** (ESV) — 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.

### III. **He was Oppressed**

- A. The first thing we notice in this text is that the Messiah opened not his mouth in the face of great suffering
  - 1. It is in the face of suffering that we most want to cry out
  - 2. Or in the face of injustice, to cry foul
- B. But Jesus, the Messiah, was silent in the face of both
  - 1. Of suffering
  - 2. And of injustice
  - 3. Jesus' suffering was even more deserving of crying
    - a. "That's not fair!"

- b. “That’s unjust!”
    - c. “That’s unrighteous!”
    - d. “That’s wicked!”
  - 4. Than Job ever was
    - a. For Job – as great as he was – was sinful human being
    - b. A state that Job himself recognizes
    - c. But Jesus was without sin
    - d. And could have easily defended Himself
- C. The first kind of suffering we see was that He was oppressed
  - 1. The Hebrew word involves an **excessive pressure**
    - a. The kind of exacting pressure involved in requiring exorbitant payment or labor
  - 2. We see that word used in Exodus of the Egyptian taskmasters
    - a. The Egyptian taskmasters kept piling on demand after demand of their Hebrew slaves
    - b. Requiring of them meeting their quotas of bricks even when they had to scrounge around for the straw which had been provided
  - 3. **Exodus 1:11** (ESV) — 11 Therefore they [the Egyptians] set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens...
  - 4. **Exodus 3:7** (ESV) — 7 Then the LORD said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters...
  - 5. The Egyptians would beat the Israelite foremen when the quotas were not met
  - 6. Similarly this kind of oppression was seen in the tribute forcibly demanded by Babylon (**Isaiah 14.4 and 2 Kings 23.35**)
  - 7. That’s the nature of the Messiah’s suffering
    - a. Increasing pressure to meet demands
    - b. And unconscionable punishment when the demands are not met
- D. Imagine the pressure the Messiah was under
  - 1. His life was under a microscope from the very moment He burst on the scene in His public ministry
  - 2. Every time He did some good, His religious enemies questioned Him, criticized Him, threatened Him
  - 3. Every time He healed someone – often on the Sabbath – the religious authorities threatened to charge Him with violating the Jewish law
  - 4. Every time He taught, He often antagonized the religious authorities
    - a. Who tended to turn the Law on its head, making it a burden rather than a guide to their constituents
  - 5. And indeed, the pressure would mount as He approached Jerusalem
    - a. Knowing that He would be carrying the burden of all those the Father had given to Him
    - b. That the eternal salvation of millions of people depended on His going to the cross
    - c. Going to His death

- d. Taking upon Himself the just punishment of all those who would ever believe on Jesus
- E. The remarkable thing was that Jesus would remain silent in the midst of such undeserved oppression
  - 1. He could have cried foul!
  - 2. He could easily have silenced those who sought to silence Him
  - 3. But instead, he withstood the oppression
  - 4. He stood firm under such intense pressure
  - 5. He opened not his mouth

#### IV. He was Afflicted

- A. And He was afflicted
- B. Imagine what kind of creature comforts He endured
  - 1. **Matthew 8:20** (ESV) — 20 And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”
- C. The week of His passion
  - 1. He was arrested like a common criminal
  - 2. He was mocked
  - 3. He was spat upon
  - 4. He was beaten unmercifully
  - 5. He was scourged with a whip with leather cords, sheep bones and pieces of metal
  - 6. They rammed a crown of thorns on His head causing blood to flow down His face
  - 7. The soldiers then beat Him with a scepter
  - 8. They forced Him to walk to the place of His execution, carrying His own cross until He was too weak to carry it – when they forced Simon of Cyrene to assist him
  - 9. Finally, He was crucified – the most painful and tortuous kind of death, in which He experienced hours of pain and suffocation
  - 10. His hands and His feet were attached to the cross by large nails, pounded one after the other – hand after hand, foot after foot
- D. If anyone deserved to cry foul, it was Jesus
- E. But the most significant afflictions Jesus endured had nothing to do with His physical suffering
  - 1. Not many people have physically suffered as much as Jesus – but there have been some
  - 2. But His most excruciating pain was spiritual – and no one has suffered the way He did
- F. The pain of His rejection of the very people He came to save
  - 1. His rejection by the religious authorities was painful to endure in and of itself
  - 2. His rejection then of the governing authorities – even though Pilate knew He was an innocent man, took its toll

3. But worse even than all of this was His rejection by His heavenly Father
  4. The moment of truth came when Jesus entered those moments which He anticipated in the Garden of Gethsemane
  5. When He looked into the cup of God's wrath and asked if there was any other way
  6. And yet, knew that He was following the will of God in going to the cross
  7. So when He cried out "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"
  8. The Father Himself turned His back on His Son
  9. And in so doing Jesus experienced the outer darkness of hell in place of all of us sinners who believe in Jesus
  10. The weeping and gnashing of teeth that we all so genuinely deserve
  11. He experienced it all
- G. He was oppressed
1. And He was afflicted
  2. Afflicted physically
  3. Afflicted emotionally
  4. Afflicted spiritually

V. **He Opened not His Mouth**

- A. Yet He opened not His mouth
1. The Servant of the Lord, the Servant of Yahweh, the Messiah did not defend Himself
    - a. He did not protest His execution
  2. When they came to arrest Him He asked them "Whom do you seek?"
    - a. When they answered, "Jesus of Nazareth"
    - b. He said, "I am He"
    - c. And when He said that, they fell back, falling to the ground
  3. He had to ask them again, "Whom do you seek?"
    - a. And when they said again, "Jesus of Nazareth" He said "I told you that I am he."
    - b. Then He thought of those disciples who were with Him – and asked that they be left alone
  4. When Peter tried to defend Jesus, taking his sword and cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant, Jesus told Him to put His sword away.
    - a. There would be no defense
    - b. Certainly no violent rebellion
  5. When the high priest questioned Jesus about His teaching, He offered no defense
    - a. He simply said He'd been speaking in public – in the synagogues and the temple
    - b. And He said He'd said nothing in secret
    - c. And simply said, "If you want to know what I've taught – ask the people who heard me"

- d. When struck by one of the high priest's servants He simply asked, "If what I said is wrong, tell Me where I was wrong. If I was right, why strike me?"
- 6. When Jesus encountered Peter in the courtyard after Peter's denial (another dimension of Jesus' afflictions)
  - a. He simply looked at Him and said nothing
- 7. His interrogation by Pilate was frustrating
  - a. For every question Pilate asked, Jesus seemed to respond with a question!
  - b. He said simply, "For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world – to bear witness to the truth."
  - c. To which Pilate threw up his hand and said, "What is truth?"
  - d. Then Pilate tried to release Jesus, knowing this was an innocent man
- 8. When Pilate had decided to go through with the crucifixion, and Jesus had been beaten, and received the crown of thorns, and Pilate displayed Jesus to the crowd seeking one final time to release Him
  - a. And when Pilate knew the crowd was demanding Jesus' crucifixion
  - b. Pilate once again interrogated Jesus
  - c. But Jesus once again remained silent
  - d. And when Pilate played the authority card ("I have the authority to execute you or release you"), Jesus simply said he would have no authority if hadn't been given by God
- 9. So Jesus was silent; He offered no defense
- 10. When crucified, He made no defense either
  - a. Only speaking to His mother and the apostle John – seeking that John care for His mother
  - b. And said only two other things
  - c. When thirsty He said, "I thirst" – hardly a defense
  - d. And finally, as he was breathing His last, He declared "It is finished"
- 11. Jesus walked through His passion without complaint
  - a. Without any attempt at defense
  - b. Without any tweet or rant or argument about His innocence
  - c. He opened not His mouth as it concerned His false accusation, trial, and punishment
- B. The text likens His response to the response of sheep
  - 1. "Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter"
    - a. "Like a sheep that before its shearers is silent"
  - 2. It is the passivity of sheep in the face of their demise that is in view
    - a. Sheep have little understanding regarding what is about to happen to them
    - b. They are on the way to their execution – and they willingly follow where they are led



3. Even when they are sheared they are humiliated
  - a. Imagine you going somewhere and having your clothing stripped from you in public
  - b. Your nakedness on display
  - c. How many of us would look forward to such an occasion?
  - d. But sheep who are sheared are shorn of their greatest attribute – their coats – that’s why they are valued
4. So in their humiliation and in their death – sheep move silently to their destiny
  - a. And so did Messiah Jesus
- C. Like sheep – who offer no defense
  1. Messiah Jesus goes to the cross
  2. In silence
  3. Speaking no defense
  4. Uttering no complaint
- D. Why?
  1. Because He did it for us!
  2. He was accomplishing our redemption
    - a. Which required His willing participation in His own demise and execution
  3. He was silent in our place
    - a. We deserved everything He went through
    - b. For we have offended a holy, eternal God
    - c. And if God this very moment decided that any one of us, or all of us, ought to enter the gates of hell and pay for our own sins
    - d. We would tweet and rant and complain – but we would know that what we would experience would be right and just
  4. But Jesus took our place on the cross
    - a. He enduring the beatings so that we would not
    - b. He lived through the mockery and indignities so we would never have to
    - c. He died in our place
    - d. And He experienced the wrath of God Almighty so that all of us who believe in Him would never have to go through what we genuinely deserve
    - e. An eternity in outer darkness
    - f. A place of weeping and gnashing of teeth
    - g. Experiencing, not the God of grace and Glory
    - h. But the backside of God – forever rejected from His presence
  5. And yet, so that would never be the case with us – he opened not his mouth

## VI. **Our Response**

- A. How should we respond?
  1. This truth should affect how we **worship**

2. We should come before this supper in abject humility
    - a. And in our own silence, remember our Lord's suffering in our place
    - b. And know that for us he was silent when He could have spoken, could have defended Himself
    - c. We should come to this table and shut our mouths
  3. We should come to this table with no sense of self-justification or self-righteousness
    - a. Knowing that should we stand before the divine tribunal, there would be nothing we could say
    - b. That we would, like Job, place our hands over our mouths
  4. In other words, we must worship this Messiah Jesus
    - a. Who has done everything for us
    - b. Even when He said nothing in the face of suffering
    - c. He was saying everything we need
    - d. He was willingly going to save a lost humanity
    - e. Save all of those who would ever believe
  5. Are you among them?
- B. And we must take Him as an **example** in our daily lives
1. **1 Peter 2:21–25** (ESV) —
    - a. 21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.
    - b. 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.
    - c. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.
    - d. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.
    - e. 25 For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.
  2. We live because He suffered and died
    - a. Leaving us an example to follow Him in willing suffering
    - b. Suffering even in silence, when silence is called for
  3. Oh, how we complain about our problems, our circumstances, our difficulties
    - a. How does that look in light of Jesus' sufferings?
    - b. Here's a picture of how it looks **[Picture]**
  4. Mel Gibson directing The Passion of the Christ
    - a. Speaking to Jim Caviezel, who played Jesus, during a break in filming
  5. But imagine it's not a film
    - a. Imagine it's not Mel Gibson

- b. Imagine instead it's a normal person trying to explain to Jesus how hard his life is
  - 6. That's how it looks
    - a. Do you realize that when you complain to Jesus about your suffering, you're complaining to the One who has really suffered
    - b. And has suffered immeasurably for you
    - c. So that you would never have to!
  - 7. But I want you to notice one other thing about this **picture**
    - a. Imagine it's not Jim Caviezel, the actor playing Jesus
    - b. Imagine that it's Jesus
    - c. And imagine that it's not Mel Gibson, the director
    - d. Imagine that it's you, opening your heart to Jesus; telling Him your troubles
    - e. Look at how attentive Jesus is
    - f. Look at how Jesus, having been oppressed and afflicted for you, in your place
    - g. Nevertheless, listens to you with rapt attention
    - h. That's what He does because He loves you
    - i. That's what Jesus does now – He listens to you
    - j. Cast all your cares on Him for He cares for you
  - 8. **Romans 8:34** (ESV) — 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.
- C. The Servant of the Lord, the Messiah, Jesus Christ
  - 1. Oppressed
  - 2. Afflicted
  - 3. Like a sheep that is led to the slaughter
  - 4. Opened not His mouth
  - 5. So that you could open yours to Him