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The Servant's Oppression

Isaiah 53.8

Series: The Suffering Servant (Communion Series)

The Village Church

August 7, 2022

I. Introduction

- A. Historically, we Americans have a strong moralistic streak
 - 1. An overriding sense of justice
 - a. An innate sense of right and wrong
 - 2. And while we often debate, and even argue, about what constitutes right and wrong
 - a. Most of us, in our generation at least, believe there is such a thing as right and wrong
 - b. I'm not as optimistic about our post-modern culture reinforcing those traditions
 - c. But even with the staunchest post-modern, one who would reject the notion of absolute truth...
 - d. When you push them far enough, even they would eventually exclaim, "That's wrong!" about something
 - 3. Francis Schaeffer used to call that feature of humanity "moral motions"
 - a. While we may not agree about the details
 - b. Every intellectually healthy human being knows there is such a thing
 - 4. And we Americans have a legal system built on just such a moralistic foundation
- B. We Americans also have a strong sense of human imperfection
 - 1. We recognize we are all finite beings
 - a. We cannot know everything
 - b. And even in the most thorough investigation
 - c. There are things we know we know
 - d. There are things we know we don't know
 - e. And there are things we don't know that we don't know
 - 2. That is true in the most rigorous scientific investigations as well
 - a. Every supposed scientific thesis is just one experiment away from being falsified
 - b. The term "settled science" is an oxymoron
 - c. Even a cursory understanding of the history of science would destroy such a notion
 - 3. In addition to being finite beings, we Americans have also recognized that we are sinful beings

- a. That in terms of our moral obligations, our performance often falls short
- C. That's why we have built a system of governance filled with checks and balances
 - 1. Why there are two different types of legislative bodies at the national level
 - 2. Why there are legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government
 - 3. And in the judicial sphere, why there are levels of judicial offices
 - a. Why there are circuit courts, district courts, federal courts, appeals courts
 - b. And eventually, the Supreme Court
- D. So when the time comes – which happens with great frequency – one court makes a decision that many consider erroneous
 - 1. The plaintiff can appeal to the next level of judicial review
 - 2. And if that level of judicial review does not appear to satisfy justice
 - 3. The plaintiff can appeal to the next level
 - 4. Until finally, we proclaim, “We’ll take this case all the way to the Supreme Court!”
 - a. Maybe then we will have justice
- E. Sometimes, in our view, even the Supreme Court errs
 - 1. And our sense of justice is frustrated

II. **The Trials of Jesus**

- A. In our study of the Gospel of John we have been studying the trials of Jesus
 - 1. We’ve learned that there were two trials of our Lord
 - 2. **The Jewish trial**
 - a. Before the Jewish Ruling Council, or the Sanhedrin
 - b. Under the superintendence of the High Priest Caiaphas
 - c. In which Jesus was found guilty of blasphemy – claiming to be God
 - d. A capital offense under Jewish law
 - e. Which created a problem for the Jewish leaders
 - f. Since under Roman occupation no one but the Romans could execute anyone
 - 3. **The Roman trial**
 - a. Judge Pontius Pilate presiding
 - b. Pilate, the Roman Procurator, Governor of the Roman province of Judea, had the responsibility and authority to hear the evidence, make the determination of guilt or innocence
 - c. Sentence the perpetrator according to the crime committed
 - d. And then execute the convicted criminal
 - e. In this trial the Jewish prosecutors changed the charge
 - f. The Romans could care less about blasphemy – that was a religious issue best left to the Jews
 - g. So instead the Jews accused Jesus of treason – of being a threat to Rome

- h. That Jesus was “king of the Jews”; liable to lead an insurrection against Rome
- B. Pilate didn’t find enough evidence against Jesus to convict him of treason
 - 1. And he proposed to punish Jesus for being a rabble-rouser, and release Him
 - 2. But as you know, the Jews wouldn’t have it; they insisted the Pilate execute Him
 - 3. Pilate even tried to use the Passover tradition of releasing to the Jews a prisoner to get Jesus off the hook
 - 4. But the Jewish leaders incited the crowd to demand the release of one Barabbas – an insurrectionist
 - 5. So finally Pilate relented; released Barabbas
 - 6. And consigned Jesus to the executioners
- C. So we’ve had two trials
 - 1. One – guilty of blasphemy
 - a. Of no interest to the Romans
 - b. Who could not execute anyone for a religious transgression
 - 2. The second – not guilty of treason
 - a. But amazingly, Pilate couldn’t withstand the pressure
 - b. And sentenced Jesus to death anyway
- D. That whole thing screams injustice!
 - 1. How could an innocent man be condemned to die?
 - a. This is outrageous – says our moralistic impulses
 - b. If this is the way the movie ends, we’re left emotionally spent, morally frustrated
 - 2. Isn’t there another tribunal?
 - a. Isn’t there another court to which we might appeal?
 - b. Isn’t there a Supreme Court which can overrule what has just taken place?
- E. Well, it turns out there is!
 - 1. It’s the tribunal of God Himself
 - a. The Judge of all the Earth
 - b. And “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?” (Genesis 18.25)
 - 2. The Judge of all the earth has been following the proceedings
 - a. He has been listening to the travesty of justice
 - b. He knows Jesus is not guilty of blasphemy – because this Jesus is the Son of God incarnate! – He is God
 - c. He knows that Jesus is no insurrectionist, no danger to Rome – He is the king, but His kingdom is not of this world
 - 3. So will the Judge of all the earth take the case?
 - a. Will He set aside the verdict?
 - b. Will He suspend the sentence?
- F. No!
 - 1. Astonishingly – the Judge of all the earth makes His decision

- a. And He declines to review the case
- b. And lets stand the verdict and the sentence of the prior courts
- 2. And Jesus proceeds to the place of execution
- 3. And we cry out, “How could God, the Judge of all the earth, allow an innocent man to go to His execution?”
 - a. But He did exactly that
- 4. In fact, God executed His own judgment against Jesus
 - a. And His own judgment exceeding even anything either the Jews or the Romans would execute
- G. Series – Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53)
 - 1. **Isaiah 53:8** (ESV) —
 - a. 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
 - b. and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living,
 - c. stricken for the transgression of my people?

III. **The Justice of God**

A. **His oppression**

- 1. “By oppression ... he was taken away”
- 2. “Oppression” (Hebrew)
 - a. Some translations render it as “prison”
 - b. And yet, Jesus was not actually in prison, at least not in the Roman variety
 - c. Except for a time in a pit below the house of Caiaphas, awaiting His transfer to Pilate – a stone cistern which would certainly qualify
- 3. But the Hebrew term more likely refers, not to a literal prison cell, or dungeon
 - a. But to the extreme pressure brought to bear on Jesus as part of the punishment He endured
 - b. Oppression is certainly the more appropriate English term
- 4. Jesus began to experience that pressure in the Garden of Gethsemane
 - a. As He stared into the cup of the wrath of God
 - b. And asked His Father if there be any other way – may that cup pass Him by
 - c. When He received His answer from the Father, He submitted to the will of the Father– “Not My will by Thine be done”
 - d. And the Bible tells us that His sweat “became like great drops of blood” (**Luke 22.44**)
 - e. And that He was in agony
- 5. The anticipation that Jesus felt was manifest in His soul
 - a. Much more than His physical punishment on the cross
 - b. His mind, will and emotions were overwhelmed with what would transpire in those moments on the cross

- c. Where the burden for all the sins of all those who would ever believe in Jesus would bear down on our Savior
 - 6. Such was the nature of His oppression
- B. **His judgment**
 - 1. **“By oppression and judgment he was taken away”**
 - 2. The judgment of God fell on our Savior
 - a. Every punishment that every sinner deserved for our cosmic rebellion against Almighty God was unleashed upon our Christ
 - 3. When we say the Apostle’s Creed we say **“He descended into hell”**
 - a. Such a statement has become controversial, even within the church
 - b. It offends all of our sensibilities
 - c. How could God consign His own Son – the innocent One – to hell?
 - d. It seems outrageously unjust, even barbaric
 - 4. What do we mean by hell?
 - a. Well, the Bible speaks about hell in euphemism and metaphor
 - b. “Outer darkness”
 - c. “Where the fire is never quenched”
 - d. “Weeping and gnashing of teeth”
 - e. “Where the worm does not die”
 - f. Typified by Gehenna, the garbage dump south of Jerusalem which was a continuously burning and smoldering, stench-filled, sulphur-smelling wasteland
 - g. Illustrated by artists and literary giants like Dante with his infamous “inferno”
 - h. Hell is the epitome of agony and suffering
 - 5. Perhaps you object!
 - a. Surely there is not such a place as is described
 - b. A place of unquenchable fire
 - c. Of inescapable and eternal suffering
 - 6. Perhaps you are right
 - a. After all, these are images, metaphors
 - b. But the more you study the Bible you realize that while much is described in terms of metaphor
 - c. The metaphor is usually a mere approximation of the reality behind the metaphor
 - 7. It’s possible that hell is not exactly like Gehenna, or like Dante’s Inferno
 - a. I would argue that it is not
 - b. No! I believe it is even worse than the metaphor
 - 8. Hell is the judgment of Almighty God on the sin of humanity
 - a. And in those moments on the cross Jesus experienced that very judgment
 - b. Jesus experienced hell
 - 9. And if you object, and say, “No, never would God send His Son to hell”
 - a. Wait until the conclusion of this message
 - b. And see if you feel the same way

- C. **His removal**
1. **“By oppression and judgment he was taken away”**
 2. “Taken away” – removed from the land of the living
 - a. Erased from the pages of history
 - b. Precisely what the Jewish leaders were hoping to do
 - c. Get rid of this pest, this Nazarene
 - d. This so-called Christ who so often embarrassed the religious leaders
 3. But it was God’s will that He would be disposed of
 - a. That He would be dismissed from the earth He had trod for 30 plus years
 - b. That the stones of Jerusalem would not bear the imprint of His sandals any longer
 4. And the priests and the scribes would be free
 - a. Free from this interloper
 5. Jesus, in fact, predicted this very thing
 - a. Telling His disciples that the chief priests and the scribes would hand Him over to the Gentiles and He would be killed
 6. And it was so
 - a. The crucifixion removed Jesus from their midst
 - b. He was entombed; sealed; guarded by the Roman soldiers
- D. **His exclusion**
1. **“... and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living...”**
 2. “Cut off” – exclusion from His own people
 3. In Israel one of the worst punishments for the worst crimes was to be cut off from the people of God
 - a. To be part of the people of God
 - b. To be included in the fellowship of God’s people
 - c. Is one of the great treasures of biblical religion
 - d. Biblical religion is a communal fellowship
 4. But for many transgressions of the Law of God, the sentence was to be cut off – excluded, separated
 5. That’s why we treasure being together as the people of God
 - a. That’s why we call this supper – communion
 - b. We do it with one another
 - c. That’s why the Jerusalem church was devoted to “the fellowship”
 - d. That’s why we at TVC are building a community of forgiveness, purpose and hope in Jesus Christ; community – we do it together
 - e. And that’s why, even in the church, unrepentance from serious sin calls for “excommunication” – disfellowshipping
 - f. Casting one who was formerly our own outside of our sphere of relationships
 6. To be cut off from the people of God
 - a. That was part of the justice of Almighty God for our Savior

7. And even more, to be cut off from God Himself
 - a. “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”
- E. **His pain**
 1. “... who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken...”
 2. “Stricken” – a violent word
 3. While I’m convinced that the soul suffering of our Savior, His oppression, His bearing the punishments of hell, His separation from His people and from His Father were the worst of our Savior’s sufferings
 - a. In no way should we dismiss the physical sufferings
 - b. Of His beatings
 - c. Of His agony on the cross
 - d. Of the pain of His physical death
 4. Jesus came as the Son of God incarnate – in a body
 - a. “... a body have you prepared for me...” (Hebrews 10.6)
 5. So physical suffering, real pain was part of the justice of Almighty God
 - a. Whatever pain you and I experience – drop in the bucket of what our Savior experienced
 - b. And our pains ought simply to remind us of what our Savior endured
- F. The justice of Almighty God
 1. The Oppression of our Savior
 2. The Judgment of hell of our Savior
 3. The Removal of our Savior
 4. The Exclusion of our Savior from His people and His Father
 5. The Pain of our Savior in His physical suffering on the cross

IV. **His Generation**

- A. **Isaiah 53:8 (ESV) —**
 1. 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
 2. and *as for his generation,*
 3. *who considered* that he was cut off out of the land of the living,
 4. stricken for the transgression of my people?
- B. **Its ignorance**
 1. The most notable thing about the generation of Jesus was that all of this was completely unrecognized by His contemporaries
 - a. They were clueless about the workings of this tribunal
 - b. They had no idea that the Judge of all the earth was working out His will
 - c. That (Isaiah 53.10) “... it was the will of the LORD to crush him”
 - d. That “... he [God] has put him to grief”
 2. The workings of Almighty God are nearly always lost on humanity
 - a. His ways are not our ways
 - b. Our imaginations are too corrupt and confused to get a sense of what God is up to

3. "... who considered...?"
 - a. No one considered
4. Humanity is marked by its ignorance of the plans and purposes of God
5. And what about our generation?
 - a. Is our generation any different?
 - b. Are we not just as clueless about the ways of God?
 - c. As you read the newspapers and magazines
 - d. As you peruse the internet for current events
 - e. As you just walk the streets of Fort Myers – indeed, even of Shell Point
 - f. What do people talk about?
 - g. Is there much sense of understanding and appreciation for the work of God in our world?
 - h. Not to mention, what God was doing with His Son?
6. "... who considered...?"
 - a. **Isaiah 57:1** (ESV) — 1 The righteous man perishes, and no one lays it to heart; devout men are taken away, while no one understands. For the righteous man is taken away from calamity...
 - b. **Romans 3:11–12** (ESV) — 11 "...no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

V. **His People**

A. **Our substitute**

1. Was there any purpose in all of this suffering?
2. **Isaiah 53:8** (ESV) —
 - a. 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
 - b. and as for his generation,
 - c. who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living,
 - d. stricken
 - e. for the transgression of my people?
3. There it is!
 - a. The purpose of God in the justice of God
 - b. **"... for the transgression of my people"**
4. Jesus, our Savior, endured the full measure of the justice of God Almighty
 - a. "For the transgression of my people"
 - b. For you!
 - c. For me!
 - d. For everyone who casts themselves on the mercy of our Savior
 - e. For all who, knowing that we have transgressed the Law of God
 - f. Knowing that we have offended the holy character of the Altogether Righteous God
5. Knowing that we are the ones who genuinely deserved
 - a. The oppression of God
 - b. The judgment of hell

- c. The removal from the land of the living
 - d. The exclusion from the people of God – indeed from fellowship with God Himself
 - e. The excruciating pain of the crucifixion
6. God's justice
- a. Poured out upon Christ
 - b. "For the transgression of my people"
 - c. God did it; Christ endured it
 - d. So you and I would never have to endure it
7. Does the notion that Christ experienced hell offend you?
- a. Would you rather do it yourself?
8. If anyone claims not to need a Savior
- a. Then you know you are on your own
 - b. Then oppression, judgment, removal, exclusion, and pain – are all on you
- B. But dear friends
1. Jesus endured all of that
- a. "For the transgression of my people"
2. "My people"
- a. The people who belong to God; the people of God
 - b. Not for an amorphous humanity
 - c. Not for a nameless mob
 - d. But for a particular people
 - e. He knows you by name
 - f. The Good Shepherd knows His sheep and calls them by name
 - g. "My people"
3. In John's Gospel – John 17
- a. God has taken a people out of the world
 - b. Has given those people to Christ
 - c. Has given Christ authority over all people
 - d. To give eternal life to all those God has taken out of the world
 - e. And given to Christ
4. Those are the ones who are "my people"
- C. Are you one of "my people?"
1. If you are, that's why we share this supper together
- a. Remembering the death of our Savior
2. His
- a. Oppression
 - b. Judgment
 - c. Removal
 - d. Exclusion
 - e. And pain
3. Which He endured
- a. For our transgressions
 - b. "For the transgression of my people?"