

* These notes are provided for personal devotional and study purposes only. They may not be published, distributed, or disseminated to others without the permission of the author.

The Servant's Innocence

Isaiah 53.9

Series: The Suffering Servant (Communion Series)

The Village Church

February 5, 2023

I. Introduction

- A. Dr. John Gerstner told the story of how, when he was teaching at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, that he would often do pulpit supply for presbyterian churches in Western Pennsylvania
 - 1. Covering for pastors on vacation
 - a. Churches without pastors
- B. On one occasion he went to a presbyterian church and was greeted by the elders when he arrived
 - 1. They told him they had scheduled a baptism that morning, and asked him if he would be willing to conduct it
 - a. This was a presbyterian church, so in their tradition they do infant baptisms for children of believers, in addition to baptizing adults who become believers
 - b. And this was to be the baptism of an infant
 - 2. In the presbyterian churches, by and large, they use a baptismal font
 - a. It has water in the bowl, and the pastor would take water from the bowl in his hand and place it on the baby's head, or sprinkle it on the child
 - 3. So they asked Dr. Gerstner if he would be willing to conduct the baptism
 - a. And he said it would be his honor to do so
- C. Then the elders said to him, "Also, Dr. Gerstner, we have a tradition in our church. We use a white carnation to dip in the water and sprinkle the child. Would you be willing to do that for us in keeping with our tradition?"
- D. Dr. Gerstner said, "That's an interesting tradition. What does the carnation represent?"
 - 1. The elder said to him, "It represents the innocence of the child."
- E. Dr. Gerstner then said, "What's the water for?"
 - 1. The elder then said, "Well that's for cleansing the child from ..."
 - a. He stopped in mid-sentence
 - b. Realizing that, why would an innocent child need cleansing?
 - 2. Needless to say, Dr. Gerstner did not use the white carnation
- F. Sometime later when Dr. Gerstner recounted that story someone asked him if he would have used a black carnation
- G. The distinguishing characteristic of Christianity, and one of the most remarkable ironies, is that there is only One who is truly innocent, who needs no cleansing of sin

1. And yet that Innocent One became sin for us so that we might become righteous

II. **The Suffering Servant**

- A. We return this morning to our communion series featuring Isaiah 53
 1. That great Servant of the Lord hymn
 - a. One of four Servant hymns in Isaiah
 - b. This one a Messianic hymn
 - c. Which details the suffering of the Messiah
 2. A suffering which He endured for others
 - a. For the sins of others
 - b. In spite of the fact that He Himself had never sinned
 3. And He did so in order to redeem a humanity for Himself
- B. This great text is a seminal text in the Old Testament
 1. It describes how this Messiah, which the Jews of Jesus' day believed would be a victorious military-political conqueror
 - a. Would actually come to die
 - b. Die a death in order to conquer more than the Roman occupation
 - c. But a death which would save His people from their sins
 - d. And spare them the eternal punishment we all genuinely deserve
 2. Since we are all sinners
 - a. And have all sinned against an eternally holy God
- C. It's been some time since we were last in Isaiah
 1. Various schedule issues have intervened, including a hurricane, Advent, and so forth
 - a. But it is never out of fashion to return to Isaiah 53
 - b. It's kind of our Old Testament home base for understanding what our Savior did for us on the cross
 2. It's also an extraordinarily powerful prophecy of the passion and death of Jesus Christ
 - a. Penned 700 or so years prior to that climax of our Savior's first advent
 - b. Yet describing in astonishing detail what He endured for you and for me
 3. That's why Isaiah 53 is one of the most frequently quoted OT passages in the NT
 - a. Jesus Himself refers to it several times as recorded in the gospels
 - b. Luke includes the account of Philip who encounters the Ethiopian eunuch reading Isaiah 53 – and he leads the official to salvation in Christ through that text
 - c. Both Peter and Paul quote Isaiah 53 in their epistles
- D. In our study of Isaiah 53 we have been working our way through the text verse by verse
 1. Mining the riches of truth in each passage

- a. Uncovering the amazing grace of the triune God in the ministry of His Servant
- E. **The Servant's Suffering**
 - 1. **The Servant's Great Exchange**
 - a. His own righteousness for our sin
 - 2. **The Servant's Redemption**
 - a. His purchase of His people out of the slave market of sin
 - 3. **The Servant's Message**
 - a. The good news that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself
 - 4. **The Servant's Incarnation**
 - a. That He came from heaven to earth
 - b. Taking upon Himself our nature so He could save us
 - 5. **The Man of Sorrows**
 - a. The nature and character of His suffering on our behalf
 - 6. **The Servant's Substitution**
 - a. How He took our place in the suffering we justly deserve
 - 7. **The Servant's Burden**
 - a. The immensity of responsibility He carried for all of those who would ever believe in Him in His work of salvation
 - 8. **The Servant's Silence**
 - a. How He refrained from His own defense as wicked men inflicted their prosecution of Him
 - 9. And **The Servant's Oppression**
 - a. How the Messiah was afflicted by His enemies – the very people who should have recognized He was fulfilling their own scriptures
- F. And today we consider **The Servant's Innocence**
 - 1. **Isaiah 53:9** (ESV) —
 - a. 9 And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

III. **The Human Condition**

- A. As indicated in the baptism story of John Gerstner, our sin is infused in us from the very beginning – even in infancy
 - 1. **Psalm 51:5** (ESV) —
 - a. 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.
 - 2. **Psalm 58:3** (ESV) —
 - a. 3 The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray from birth, speaking lies.
 - 3. **Job 14:1** (ESV) —
 - a. 1 “Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble.”
- B. In the beginning sin was not an aspect of human nature
 - 1. God created man and woman in His own image and likeness

- a. And as the pinnacle of creation, humanity and all of creation were deemed “very good”
 2. But when Adam and Eve rebelled against God in their probation in the garden, sin entered the human race
 - a. Adam and Eve hid from God’s presence, and were alienated from Him – though He had blessed them with every conceivable beauty and benefit
 - b. Adam and Eve were also alienated from each other – hiding themselves from themselves by the institution of their makeshift wardrobes
 3. And from that time on Adam’s and Eve’s image of God was corrupted
 - a. And it was their own image that was passed on to their offspring
 - b. **Genesis 5:3** (ESV) — 3 When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image...
 - c. The first child of Adam and Eve – Cain – became the first murderer
- C. Sin, then, was passed on generation to generation
 1. **Romans 5:12** (ESV) —
 - a. 12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—
 2. The result of this inheritance of sin through the generations of humanity is death
 3. **Romans 6:23** (ESV) —
 - a. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 4. **Ephesians 2:1–3** (ESV) —
 - a. 1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins
 - b. 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—
 - c. 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.
- D. The effect of this inbred sin is hostility toward God
 1. **Romans 8:7–8** (ESV) —
 - a. 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.
 - b. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.
 2. **1 Corinthians 2:14** (ESV) —
 - a. 14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.
- E. That’s why the biblical assessment of humanity is universally dismal
 1. **Romans 3:23** (ESV) —

- a. 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
 - 2. **Romans 3:10–12** (ESV) —
 - a. 10 as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one;
 - b. 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God.
 - c. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”
- F. Maybe you have a hard time swallowing this sinfulness of humanity stuff
 - 1. Maybe you just can’t imagine such a dismal assessment
 - 2. But I hate to break it to you
 - a. You are a sinner whether or not you disavow your sinful connection to the rest of humanity
 - 3. R.C. Sproul’s example
 - a. For the sake of argument, say God, who is altogether holy and righteous, gave everyone one free sin to commit without consequence
 - b. One “get out of jail free card”
 - c. Now God doesn’t do that – remember He’s altogether holy
 - d. But let’s say He did – one free sin
 - e. How long ago did you use yours up?
- G. Face it – you’re just like the rest of us
 - 1. You’ve sinned and fallen short of the glory of God
 - 2. You are a sinner
 - 3. And sinning comes naturally to you

IV. **The Grave**

- A. Text
 - 1. **Isaiah 53:9** (ESV) —
 - a. 9 And they made his grave with the wicked
 - b. and with a rich man in his death...
- B. The Servant was destined for the grave
 - 1. That is, death would be His calling
 - a. He would be born to die
 - b. He would live with the understanding that He would face death like the rest of sinful humanity
 - c. For the wages of sin is death
 - 2. Apostles’ Creed
 - a. He was born of the virgin Mary
 - b. Suffered under Pontius Pilate
 - c. Was crucified
 - d. Dead, buried...
 - 3. The grave was more than one of a series of unfortunate circumstances
 - a. Not just a way-station on the road to somewhere else
 - b. It was a purposeful, intentional destination
 - c. Jesus would die and be buried
 - d. And Isaiah prophesied that this was the Messiah’s mission

- C. **The Wicked**
1. And His destination would be with the wicked
 - a. “And they made his grave with the wicked” (**Isaiah 53.9**)
 2. He was, of course, crucified between two thieves
 - a. Thieves who had committed capital crimes
 3. And there He was – Messiah Jesus – in the midst of sin and sinners
 - a. Identifying with them
 - b. A comrade in their suffering
 4. And those were not the only ones crucified by the Romans
 - a. Many others – insurrectionists, murderers, adulterers – were similarly afflicted
 - b. And Jesus was counted among them
 5. And while you may not have been crucified by the Romans (though Peter and Paul were!)
 - a. And we may not be sitting on death row today
 - b. We too bear the sentence of death
 - c. Sentence of death because we find ourselves at odds with the divine tribunal
 - d. Guilty before the judge of all the earth
 - e. Worthy of execution
 6. And all human beings have received the same sentence
 - a. Because all human beings die
 7. They say there are only two things certain in this world – death and taxes
 - a. And some people are able to avoid taxes
 - b. But no one is able to avoid death
 8. Every single person in this room – should Jesus not return soon – will eventually find the same fate
 - a. Every one of us will discover the grave in one form or another
 - b. Even though we don’t like to think much about it
 9. Which is certain evidence of our guilt before the Creator of the human race
 - a. We’re all going to die
- D. **The Rich**
1. But then we have a surprise in Messiah’s death, in the Servant’s death
 - a. “And with a rich man in his death” (**Isaiah 53.9**)
 2. This is actually a contrast with the previous statement
 - a. “And they made his grave with the wicked...”
 - b. “And with a rich man in his death.”
 3. In the ancient world, as far as graves are concerned – the grave of the wicked and the grave of the rich man are quite different
 - a. The rich are accorded great honor in their burial
 - b. There is often a degree of pomp and circumstance in the burial of the rich
 - c. Not so with the wicked
 4. Example – my father

- a. Was a career police officer in a large suburban police department outside Washington, D.C.
 - b. Retired as major after a lengthy career; highly regarded by his peers
 - c. He was also involved in the leadership of the local volunteer fire department
 - d. Served as chief for a time, and president of their board
 - e. So when he died, the police and firemen got involved – and pretty much took over the proceedings
 - f. There were fire trucks and police cars and motorcycles and honor guards
 - g. Following the funeral, there was four mile parade of police and fire vehicles with lights flashing from the funeral home to the fire department where there was a dinner
 - h. Unbelievable!
 - i. If he had been a crook, that would never have happened
5. In the ancient world, the rich were accorded the best burial places
- a. But the criminals, the worst
 - b. Criminals might get a grave
 - c. But then they might get an unmarked grave in a cemetery
 - d. But then they might be consigned to a “Potters Field” where they are buried with the nameless and the homeless
 - e. But the really wicked get no grave at all – like Jezebel whose remains after the birds took care of her were not worth burying!
6. So you have this strange confluence of almost contradictory destinies
- a. Grave with the wicked – for Messiah identified Himself with sinners
 - b. Yet He’s accorded the honor of burial like a rich man
7. It’s as if people would treat Him as a common criminal, a despicable human – one of those deplorables...
- a. And yet, they realize that’s just not who He really is
 - b. That in spite of His identification with sinners – He really is worthy of great honor
8. And Isaiah prophesies as much
- a. And that’s exactly what happens
 - b. He’s crucified with criminals
 - c. And He’s buried in the tomb of a rich man – Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy Pharisee
 - d. Seeks the body of this One who was despised by his compatriots, condemned by Pilate, murdered by the Romans
 - e. And yet, gives Him an honorable burial
9. But when Isaiah wrote that – the people would have said, “Say, what?... What are you talking about, Isaiah? You’re talking nonsense!”
- a. But Isaiah was proclaiming the Word of God
 - b. True in every detail

V. **The Servant's Innocence**

- A. So why was this Messiah's destiny?
1. Why this strange confluence of contradictions?
- B. Because this Messiah, in spite of His identification with sin and sinners – was Himself sinless
1. And Isaiah got this right too!
 2. “Although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.”
(**Isaiah 53.9**)
 3. He did not act, and had never acted, the part of the criminal or the wicked
 - a. There was no violent act – He was no insurrectionist, no murderer, no thief
 - b. No deceiver, no liar
 4. Messiah Jesus was blameless in both deed and word

C. **His Deeds**

1. Consider His deeds
 - a. He went about doing good
 - b. He healed the sick
 - c. He released those captives to demonic possession and oppression
 - d. He forgave sinners
 - e. He fed the hungry
 - f. He spent His life leaving every square foot on which He stepped better than He found it
 - g. Rather than a trail of dust and debris – which is what most influential people in this world leave behind – He left a trail of redemption
2. And those were just His positive acts – He committed no sins of commission
 - a. But neither did He commit sins of omission either
 - b. He left nothing undone that ought to have done
 - c. He alone could say “I always do those things that please Him [the Father]” (**John 8.29**)
 - d. He alone could say, “I have accomplished the work that you gave me to do” (**John 17.4**)
3. Is there anyone here who could begin to approach that standard?
 - a. Anyone who has ever committed no sin?
 - b. Anyone who has always done everything possible for others, omitting nothing?

D. **His Words**

1. Then consider His words
2. **John 6:68** (ESV) —
 - a. 68 Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life...”
3. **John 6:63** (ESV) —
 - a. 63 “The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”
4. **John 7:40–41** (ESV) —

- a. 40 When they heard these words, some of the people said, “This really is the Prophet.”
 - b. 41 Others said, “This is the Christ.” ...
 - 5. In word and deed – Messiah Jesus was blameless, faultless, sinless, guiltless
 - a. And positively godly, wonderful, beautiful, excellent, praiseworthy, righteous, and holy
- E. Testimony of the NT from beginning to end
 - 1. “The Holy and Righteous One” – Acts 3.14
 - 2. “He knew no sin” – 2 Corinthians 5.21
 - 3. “Lamb without spot or blemish” – 1 Peter 1.19
 - 4. “... who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” – Hebrews 4.15

VI. Retrieving Innocence

- A. What difference does this make?
 - 1. Why is it so crucial that Messiah Jesus is innocent?
 - a. The only truly innocent human
- B. 2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV) —
 - 1. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
- C. Messiah Jesus
 - 1. Whose grave was made with the wicked
 - a. Though was with a rich man in his death
 - 2. Because he had done no violence,
 - a. And there was no deceit in his mouth... (Isaiah 53.9)
 - 3. Has made it possible for us to retrieve the innocence that we lost
 - a. Has made it possible for our black carnations to turn into white carnations
 - b. Has enabled the unholy and unrighteous to become genuinely holy and righteous
- D. Romans 8:1–4 (ESV) —
 - 1. 1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
 - 2. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.
 - 3. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.
 - 4. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,
 - 5. 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us,
 - 6. who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.
- E. The Servant’s Innocence was intentional, purposeful
 - 1. To recreate a humanity in which sin no longer has dominion
 - a. Is a defeated foe

- b. Is no longer destined to reign in our mortal bodies
- 2. But by the Spirit of Christ, by the Holy Spirit
 - a. Makes us new creatures – new creations
 - b. God's masterpieces
- 3. And only a sinless, truly innocent Messiah, could qualify to save a sinful humanity
 - a. And grant us the power of sanctification
 - b. To free us from the bondage to sin