

Pierced and Crushed

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[0 : 00] So we continue in our series on the servant songs. There are five of them in Isaiah and these are songs. They're poems and they're about the servant. And the New Testament repeatedly identifies the servant as Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

And as Derek prayed just a second ago, there are even aspects of the servant songs that tell you more about Jesus, about the Messiah than the Gospels do. And so what we have here is we've said from week one, we have a Christology in music and song. Christology is a deep study of Jesus Christ and thinking about who He is and what He did.

And this is a Christology in music. Even in this passage actually there are places and it stands as that rhyme in Hebrew. Of course when you translate it, it doesn't rhyme anymore. But it did. It used to rhyme and when it was in its original language.

And the point at the center here in this passage is really the same point that we've been making. It's the same point as week one in Isaiah 42.

And it's a paradox of the servant king. In Hebrew, servant is the word *eved*, slave. Servants, the nicer translation. It's the slave king.

[1 : 24] And it's two concepts that don't go together. The paradox is that the king of all the world should be the slave of all the world.

And so this is the climax. This is Isaiah 53. This is Isaiah 53. This is the climax of the servant songs. It's really the climax of prophecy itself in the entirety of the Old Testament. So it's solemn. It's holy ground. It's the kind of passage that a preacher wants to preach and doesn't want to preach from at the very same time.

I've got, we've got several books downstairs that we've been using on the servant songs and two or three of them, three 400 page books are exclusively on Isaiah 53.

And what that means is there's a lot here to see and there's even more to miss in 30 minutes. So we're going to at least do two weeks on it. We're going to break it down a little bit. So this is holy ground. Take off your shoes with me.

Come and worship Jesus with me as we think about it. We're going to look at four things. Let me say this first. The song is in five stanzas. If you flip, if you have a Bible and just look at verses from verse four, which should be on a new page, if you have one of our Bibles, you'll see that at the end of verse six, there's a gap between verse six and verse seven.

[2 : 52] And then that happens again at the end of verse nine. Those are the stanza breaks. And there, this is literally a song and there are five stanzas to it. I'm going to look at the first three stanzas tonight and we're going to do four things. We're going to look at the reasonable servant, the unexpected servant, the ordinary servant and the voluntary servant.

Okay, so first the reasonable servant. Isaiah ministered in the northern kingdom, sorry, in the southern kingdom talking about the northern kingdom 700 years before Jesus was born.

700 years before Jesus was born, seven centuries. For some people, this and for some scholars, the text of Isaiah written here in the servant songs, they suggest wasn't actually written down until much later than that.

My personal view is that I think that this was composed during the time of Isaiah's ministry when he was alive. But the latest possible day that any scholar has ever given for the servant songs actually being written down if they were passed on from Isaiah through music, through oral tradition and music is the year 400.

And that means at the latest possible scenario, these songs were written down 400 years before Jesus was born. And I think they were written down 700 years before Jesus was born.

[4 : 15] And that means that there is no getting around this passage immense predictive power. In verse 12, sorry, verse 13, behold, my servant shall act wisely. This passage is about a servant. And the question that gets asked is who is the servant? Who is the servant in this passage?

And there's traditionally been three answers to that question. Some have said that this isn't about some future Messiah. This is about Israel.

This is a collective servant. And sometimes in the book of Isaiah, Israel, the people of God are indeed called the servant. Some people say this is about Isaiah, because sometimes in the book of Isaiah, Isaiah is actually called the servant.

And then of course, Christians for centuries have said, no, this is about the Messiah. And so the reason that some people pick Israel or Isaiah is to get around the predictive power, the prophetic power of this passage.

Because when you read it, you can't help but see the parallels between the Gospels and what's happening here in Isaiah 53 that was written 700 years before Jesus was born. But let me just show you briefly. It can't be collective and it can't be Isaiah.

[5 : 41] If you look down at verse one, everybody agrees in 53 one that Isaiah is speaking here. Who has believed what they heard from us and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

This is a prophet speaking. And he's talking about the revelation that God is speaking about the servant here at the end of 52. And the pronoun that Isaiah used, we're just going to do a little grammar for just 10 seconds and we'll be done with grammar.

The pronoun that Isaiah uses is the first person plural throughout the whole passage. So he says, who has believed what they heard from us? Or he says he has borne our infirmities. He has borne our sorrows, our trespasses.

Meaning he, Isaiah, is speaking for the collective. He's speaking for Israel. He's speaking for the whole. And he's talking about a hymn the whole time. He has borne our transgressions.

He's the masculine. It's first person singular. It's third person singular. It's he. So it's a collective group talking about a singular person who is masculine, who is male.

[6 : 48] It has to be about the Messiah. It has to be about somebody in the future, a man that is to come. And that's why in Acts chapter 8, the Ethiopian eunuch is traveling down from Jerusalem back to Ethiopia.

And Philip comes upon his carriage and the Ethiopian eunuch is reading Isaiah 53. And he turns to Philip and says, and Philip asks him, do you understand what you're reading?

He says, I don't. And it says that Philip then told him the story of Jesus Christ and all the things that had happened in Jerusalem. And the Ethiopian eunuch turns to Philip and says, there's water over there.

Baptize me. Baptize me. What are we waiting for? Baptize me right now. I don't need to. You don't have to convince me anymore. And why? Why does he want to be baptized so immediately? And it's because he read Isaiah 53 and then he heard the story of Jesus Christ and he saw the predictive power of this prophecy that was written 700 years before Jesus was ever born.

And so he concluded, it's very reasonable to believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It's very reasonable. It's very rational based on reading Isaiah 53.

[8 : 07] It means that Jesus is the Messiah and the Messiah is Jesus and it's all true. It's all true. Okay, so that's the first thing. He's the reasonable servant.

Okay, so now let's dive into the stanzas. Secondly, he's the unexpected servant. Now, if you look with me at 52 verse 13, he says, God speaks and says, Behold, my servant shall act wisely.

There's a footnote there and if you just look at the footnote, it says, or prosper. This is a Hebrew euphemism. Literally it means, Behold, my servant shall succeed.

He shall prosper. He shall win. The servant will win. He can't be stopped when we talked about that in the first week. And then it goes on, he shall be high and lifted up. He shall be exalted.

The servant will win. He won't fail at his task. And then you'll see in verse 14, as many were astonished at you and there's a dash.

[9 : 20] You see the dash? If you look down at the Bible, there's a dash. And that means that the thought of verse 14 continues. The thought, sorry, verse 13 continues in verse 15.

So my servant shall be exalted. He shall succeed. He shall prosper. He can't be stopped. And then verse 15, so shall he sprinkle many nations. Sprinkle, that's a term from Leviticus 4, which means to cleanse the temple.

He shall cleanse many nations. Kings will shut their mouths because of him. In other words, they won't know what hit him. That which has not been told of them, they now will see. The servant will be exalted. He can't be stopped. He's going to be victorious.

And when he comes, even kings will have to shut their mouths because they'll never could have guessed. They never could have expected this servant, this king, who this man is. Why? How? What does that mean?

And that's why the dashes are there. The dashes in the middle of this passage about the exaltation of a king to come. There is a parenthetical comment, an interruption.

[10:29] And what does the interruption say? How will he be so unexpected this king? And this is what it says. His appearance was so marred beyond human likeness.

And his form beyond that of the children of mankind. How, why will all the kings of the earth shut their mouth?

Marvel totally not expect who's about to come, the servant that's being talked about here. And it's because when this king comes, he will be so disfigured that he will not look human.

He will become so marred that he will be subhuman. It's a king that no one could have expected. I saw a photo this week from, once again I've seen this photo before and probably you have too, if you see it. It's a picture from April the 4th, 1945, when the American forces went into Buchenwald outside of Weimar and liberated the concentration camp there.

[11:45] And these American troops turned a corner and outside of a labor building, there was a pile seven feet high of bodies just stacked one upon each other like Legos.

And when you look at the picture, they are so malnourished and thin and skinny that you can't tell which one of them, which ones are children and which ones are adults.

They're so small, all of them. And when you look at the picture, it makes you nauseous, it makes you sick. And in verse 14, when it says, as many were astonished at you, before it talks about the servant who would become subhuman, who would be so marred that he would look less than human, that little word astonished there is a verb that literally means shattered or bent over to vomit.

Sometimes it's also used for what happens to a ruined city, a city gets shattered, ruined. So what it's saying here is that when you see him, when all the kings of the earth see him, they will be bent over and sick and nauseous, because the king of the world has come and become so marred that he looks like he's less than human.

Now, what does that mean? Well, the word marred here is the term that in your Bible most of the time is translated as blemished.

[13:17] So if you read the first five books of the Old Testament, all the time when they're talking about the law, they're saying you cannot bring a blemished lamb to the slaughter, to sacrifice.

The lamb cannot be blemished, right? And it's taking that same term. God would not accept a blemished lamb to come into his altar in the time of the Old Testament in the tour of the first five books.

But here it's saying the servant will be marred. It's the exact same word. He will be blemished. He will be like the sheep that weren't even allowed to go to the slaughter for the sacrifice to God.

And why does he use this term? Well, I think he does because at the end of our passage in 53.6, it says that the servant will come for us. We who were like sheep, lambs, gone astray, rebel lambs. Now, I'm not a shepherd. I've never been a shepherd. Although I did spend a summer right next to a bunch of sheep. That's for another time, that's for you.

[14:22] But shepherds tell me when I talk to shepherds that sheep are very dumb animals. And some of you probably have worked with sheep before. Sheep are really dumb animals.

And what they do is that when they're in their group, they veer off and they go their own way, completely isolated. And that's why Jesus in the Gospels uses sheep as a metaphor for the church so many times with the people.

They're dumb, they go their own way, they veer off on their own. And the only thing that the shepherd can do is go after them and save them because they're totally helpless unless the shepherd come and get them. They'll never come back. The sheep will not return to the herd without the shepherd actually going out and getting them.

And at the end of this passage, it says we, all of us, are like sheep gone astray. We're like dumb sheep, if you will, that have ventured away from the way, the path that God has set out for us.

And here it's saying that Jesus has to become like the blemish, the marred sheep in Israel, the sheep that had strayed the most away.

[15 : 31] But to become something less than human even. And what that means is what we're looking at here is the principle of substitution. The king became the marred lamb. Not even a good one.

This king did not come in the weight of glory like other kings would, but wearing the weight of our blemishes and it drove him all the way to being something less than human at the cross.

And he was marred beyond human likeness. He was marred so I wouldn't have to be. He was marred so you wouldn't have to be. And that means he's our substitute.

And so Isaiah at the beginning of the next stanza just to close the second point out, he says, who has believed what they have heard from us? Who has believed what they had heard from us?

And I think that they've rendered this in English to be poetic. It's kind of tricky. In other words, who would have ever expected to get a prophecy like this? That's what he's saying. You look at the very next line.

[16 : 42] To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? The arm of the Lord there means the power of God. To whom in all of history has the power of God ever been revealed like this?

The King of all the world, the one who upholds the cosmos by the word of his power, become marred like a blemish sheep. So disfigured at the cross that we have to turn our eyes away.

Who would have expected it? And so he's the unexpected servant. All right, third of four. He's also the ordinary servant.

Now what we've been talking about, Jesus Christ being marred or blemished, is what theologians have traditionally called an aspect of Christ's humiliation.

That Jesus throughout his life was humiliated. And there are many aspects to that humiliation. Being marred or blemished is one aspect.

[17 : 47] But there's another aspect here in the first stanza in 53, 1-3. And you see it right at the beginning of verse 2. For he grew up before him like a young plant and like a root out of dry ground.

He had no former majesty that we should look at him and no beauty that we should desire him. Now this metaphor, this is a metaphor here. He grew up out of the dry ground like a young plant. The New Testament repeats it.

What this is saying here is that he was ordinary. He grew up, he was a fledgling just like you and I. He was sinless, but he was a baby that cried and he had to be fed and changed.

And as he grew up, his mother taught him how to read. He's not like a computer who plugs into the divine mind and downloads omniscience.

Jesus was not omniscient while he walked this earth. He clearly doesn't know everything in the gospels. He stood beside his father's workbench and learned to use the tools of carpentry.

[19 : 00] He probably went out with his dad and fixed houses that needed repairing as a carpenter. Nobody noticed him. He had no beauty or form that anybody would notice.

He wasn't a pretty person. He wasn't gorgeous. He didn't stand out in a crowd. And the gospels basically show up 29 years into his life after just the very beginning.

And for 29 years, he wasn't noticed. And the reason we know that is because in Mark 3 and Luke 5, when he goes to his hometown and he reads the scroll of Isaiah and says, I am the anointed one that Isaiah is talking about, everybody's like, that's Joseph's boy.

He lived down the street from me. Like, there's no way. I mean, he's normal. He's ordinary. He's a kid I knew when he was growing up. This is why Bill Lane, a commentator in Mark says this in Mark 3, the eyes of the people could not penetrate in this moment the veil of his ordinariness.

They couldn't penetrate the veil of how ordinary he was to see the divine. This is why Nathaniel, at the beginning of the gospel, when they say, come and follow Jesus, we found the Messiah, he said, and they say, where is he from?

[20 : 24] And they tell him, he's from Nazareth. He says, there's no way the Messiah is from Nazareth. Nazareth is a terrible place to live. Like, it's one of the worst villages in the whole of Judea. Like, there's no way the Messiah, he was ordinary.

He was lower class. His family actually was among the poorest substratta. We know that because when it comes time to make the sacrifice after she gives birth, she offers a pigeon, which was the lowest level of sacrifice you could offer for the lowest level of income.

Verse 3, it goes on, he was despised and rejected by men. Now, this word despised actually, it literally means to make light of, or to mock, to make fun of.

So it's saying that while he was on this earth, he was often made light of. He wasn't taken seriously. And so for that reason, he was just rejected, thrown out by many.

And Isaiah says, in Isaiah 53.1, this is the revelation of God himself. This is the word of God, the very speech of God set forth.

[21 : 41] And he was incredibly ordinary. It could be very important for some of us tonight here to know that Jesus Christ, the God-men who walked this earth, was ordinary.

And that he wasn't a pretty person. He wasn't gorgeous. And most people aren't gorgeous. And he wasn't impressive.

He wouldn't have done well at many of the job interviews we go to. He wouldn't have had all the marketable skills. He didn't have a formal education.

He wasn't a successful person by any sense of human standards. And most people aren't.

Most people aren't. He was ordinary. But there's also, I think, an ordinariness about Christianity itself that follows on from Jesus' life. When you first become a Christian, you want change fast.

[22 : 46] You want to be changed quickly. And you want the sins that are indwelling in your heart and the things that you know are so messed up about you to go away as fast as possible.

And the picture that we actually get from the New Testament is that it doesn't work like that most of the time. Now some of you are older than me.

Some of you, I can see. Not many, but some. And, you know, I'm not that old, but as I get, as the seasons go by in my life, the few that have, I do know that true change comes about through ordinary people reading the Bible in ordinary ways day in and day out and letting it speak through you from the inside out.

Ordinarily learning wisdom by just getting into the text prayerfully. And that's the ordinariness of the Christian life, and it follows from the ordinariness of its Savior, the lowliness of its Savior.

Change just doesn't happen fast. It's a process. And that's why Paul uses the metaphor of the athlete, the methodical athlete, who disciplines himself day in day out, week in week out, to finally get the prize.

[24 : 17] Okay, so that's third and fourth and finally. In the third stanza, we see a voluntary servant.

Now, all of these songs are about the servant, and the servant is an evad, servant, a slave. And this, in Philippians chapter two, I think Paul is directly working, I've become convinced as I read these, with the servant songs in Philippians two, when he says, I want all of you, the church, to take on the mind of God.

And so what he does is he invites you into an extraordinary moment when he says, I'm going to take you up into the very mind of the Son of God and tell you what Jesus, the Son of God, before he became incarnate, was thinking.

And this is what Jesus was thinking before he became the Son of God, oh, sorry, this is what the Son of God was thinking before he became incarnate, Jesus Christ.

He did not account equality with God, something to be held onto, but he made himself nothing, taking on the form of a servant, a doula, a slave even, taking on the form of a slave.

[25 : 33] And what that means, what Paul is telling us there, is he's thinking back about the servant songs, telling us, when you read about the servant here, you're reading about a servant that became a slave, very God himself, voluntarily.

It was his mind, it was his idea, it was his decision to take on the form of a slave. He did it voluntarily, and so what we're reading about in the climax of this servant song that we're about to look at just for two, three minutes, is it's voluntary love.

So just listen to the voluntary, this love that you're about to hear is entirely voluntary on the part of God. Surely he has borne our griefs, surely he's carried our sorrows, but we esteemed him, we treated him as stricken, smitten by God, cursed, that's what that means, afflicted, but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was crushed for our inequities, upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, by his stripes we are healed.

The principle in all of that is, may for him, him for me, may for him, him for me. Donald MacLeod talks about a story from a missionary that he heard in several of his books, Donald MacLeod professor at, emeritus professor at ETS, in several of his books where he hears of a missionary encounter with a man in Sub-Saharan Africa that knew very little English, but had encountered the

gospel, and when he first hears the gospel he simply responds and says this, he die, me no die. He die, me no die, him for me, him for me, me on him, you see he has borne our griefs, our sorrows, our inequities, our trespasses, he was wounded for us, him for us.

[27 : 39] He's the brother that went out into the far country to bring back his prodigal, his prodigal brothers and sisters. He's the shepherd who goes after the dumb sheep that stray from the path, even when he has the wealth of 99 others.

And so what we're reading about here, and I can only skim it for just a minute, is an ultimate voluntariness. This is what he chose. This is what God chose to do for us.

And the climax is that he was pierced by nails, the physical pain, and that he was crushed for our inequities, which is a spiritual verb, meaning he was forsaken.

He went under ultimate pain, being forsaken by his father, being ultimately abandoned, and that's voluntary love. He wanted to do it.

I was in seminary and one of my professors was lecturing. I've told this once before here. And he stopped the class and he just said, guys, why does God love us?

[29 : 02] And the first super eager person that wanted to be impressive raised their hand and said, because of the impeccability of the divine decree.

And he said, no, maybe, but no. The only answer is, I don't know. He loves us because he loves us. And this is the ultimate climax, the presentation of the voluntary love of God himself. Become something less than human, marred for us, for you.

And now the only question we can conclude with is why did he do it? And just to dip into the next passage next week, which Neil's supposed to preach from, I don't know if he even knows that. I'm telling him right now. Verse 11. Two weeks, sorry, two weeks. Yeah, two weeks. Verse 11.

[30 : 08] Out of the anguish of his soul, he shall see and be satisfied. Out of what that's talking about is the cross. The moment of the cross when he's being ultimately abandoned by his father, forsaken by his friends, marred in a way that we couldn't look at him.

It made us nauseous. Out of the anguish, the anguish of his soul being forsaken, he looked up and he saw and he was satisfied.

Do you know what he looked at? Do you know what he saw and was satisfied with in that moment of being ultimately forsaken by his father, crushed for our inequities?

It was you. It was you. He was being crushed. He was being abandoned by his father and he looked up and he was satisfied even in that moment. Because he was thinking about you. He knew you. Paul teaches that he knew you on the cross.

And the New Testament says it like this, for the joy that was set before him, the joy set before him, he despised the shame. He endured the pain of the cross and that joy, the writer in Hebrews makes clear, was his bride, you.

[31 : 28] And it was so that he could give you verse five, Shalom, peace. Peace. He was marred so you wouldn't have to be.

Do you know that, do you know, do you know that you were his joy when he was forsaken by his father at the cross?

And do you live in the light of that fact? Are you conscious of the love of Christ, the voluntary love of the Son of God who upholds the world by the word of his power, crushed for you when you wake up and you live your life day to day?

Is it a love that you're aware of, that you can taste? Do you know that the servant king who knew you at the cross was only satisfied in his forsakenness because he wanted you?

What's prayer? Father, we thank you for the gospel. We thank you for the prophecy of Isaiah 53 and its beauty. And we ask that you would make it true for us, that you would make us believe it, that you would give us the eyes to see the love, to respond to the love of Christ, volunteered for us.

[32 : 49] And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.