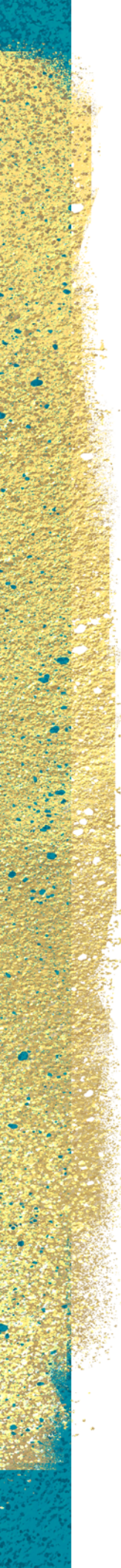


HE WAS CRUSHED
WE ARE HEALED



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SERIES INTRODUCTION

What is wrong with the world? Why do we suffer as we do and carry wounds—internal and external—that cause us to limp through life? Is there healing available, and if so, where do we find it? Who will give it? God answers that sin, in all its manifold forms, has so broken the world and us with it that suffering and death are now normative. We have rejected the Lord and cannot mend ourselves or provide the healing our loved ones need. But God has a plan.

Initially, the nation of Israel was called to be God's servant to the world, bringing His redemptive healing to all peoples. But like the first man, Israel turned inward and selfishly served themselves, spurning God's call. Yet God stayed true to His commitment to redeem and heal, promising to one day send His Servant, who would reconcile us to the Lord.

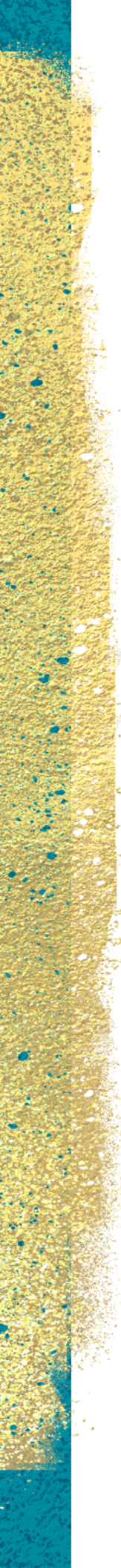
In chapters 49-55, the prophet Isaiah gives us the *Servant Songs*, poetic descriptions of this Servant. Holy Week hones in on the fourth song and the One Isaiah foretells.

JESUS IN ISAIAH

Isaiah's ministry occurred during a tumultuous time in Judah, the Southern Kingdom. Threatened by the mighty Assyrians, the people of Judah turned from the true God: though they participated in ceremonies and sacrifices, their faith wasn't in the Holy One and His promises; though they claimed to trust God, they were personally, spiritually, and socially unfaithful to their covenant with Him. So the Lord, through Isaiah, promised both *judgment* and *hope*: judgment for the unrepentant (in the form of exile) and future hope for the remnant who still trusted God.

Exile and judgment would not be the end of Israel's story, for a single figure—whom God calls the *Servant*—would one day rescue God's remnant. How? He would bear God's wrath against sin, willingly being crushed under God's justice so that the Lord's beloved people could be healed of their sin-sick idolatry, rebellion, and distrust.

Isaiah 42 presents the Servant as the chosen and Spirit-anointed one who brings justice gently but powerfully.



Isaiah 49 highlights the Servant's calling from the womb and His role in restoring Israel and being a light to the Gentiles.

Isaiah 50 shows His obedient suffering in the face of rejection, fully trusting in God despite disgrace.

And in Isaiah 52:13–53:12, with explicit, foretelling accuracy, Isaiah poetically describes Jesus's crushing on the cross and the subsequent healing He secures for all who trust Him; God's judgment falls upon God.

PALM SUNDAY

ISAIAH 52:13 - 53:3

MAIN POINT

The Servant is described as someone coming out of the left field of obscurity and intimately familiar with rejection. The unexpected King over all kings is Jesus, who was doubted and mocked by even His own family. But before His ultimate rejection, Jesus receives praise on Palm Sunday.

Despite God's confirmation of Jesus as His Son and Israel's Messiah, Jerusalem will turn on Christ by crying out, "Crucify him!"

GROUP INTRO

If someone had to describe your default disposition, would you be a

- A. Palm Sunday person (*you want to celebrate!*)
- B. Good Friday person (*life is serious, and so are you.*)
- C. Or a Resurrection Sunday person (*the glass is always half-full!*)

TEXT

1. This passage is the fourth "Servant Song" in Isaiah. These poetic descriptions reference a figure (the Servant) whom God will work through to bring salvation. Read Isaiah 52:13. What three things are said about the Servant here, and what might each reveal about his mission?

Leader help: The Servant will accomplish what He came to do (i.e., "act wisely" and perfectly obey God, bringing redemption to God's people) and ultimately be exalted and vindicated. These are prophetic references to the resurrection and ascension of Jesus after His humiliating death. The apostle Paul says that Jesus's resurrection secured our justification (see Romans 4:20-25).

2. Read Isaiah 52:14-15, then read Exodus 29:21 and Leviticus 4:1-6. Isaiah tells us that the Servant will "sprinkle many nations." Based on the other Old Testament passages, what will the results be when the Servant does this?

Leader help: "Sprinkling" was a symbolic act performed by God's appointed priests. The priests would sprinkle the blood of a sacrificed animal to symbolize God's healing from the effects of the fall and forgiveness of sins. Here, the Servant sprinkles not only the Israelites but "the nations," pointing us forward to Jesus's priestly act of giving His own life for all who trust Him.

3. Read Isaiah 53:1-3. Despite God's power and presence (that's the meaning of "arm of the LORD") being revealed through the Servant (verse 1), he is ultimately rejected and treated as if he's worthless. How did Jesus fulfill both of these realities—the power and presence of God and the rejection of humanity?

Leader help: Jesus performed miracles as signs of His divine identity and redemptive power (see John 2:11; 3:2; 7:31). Despite His amazing teaching, mighty miracles, and numerous signs pointing to His identity as the long-awaited Messiah, Jesus was rejected by Israel's faithless spiritual leaders and fickle followers (see John 12:31-40).

APPLICATION

1. This section of Isaiah acts almost like an indictment against humanity for our collective unbelief. Jesus has been revealed as God in the flesh, worthy of our trust and obedience. Still, we often "esteem Him not," rejecting His rightful place as Lord in our lives just like those who originally crucified Him. How does Jesus respond to Christians in these moments?

2. Jesus intimately knows the pain of rejection, loneliness, loss, and grief and does not cast aside the weak and weary. How have you personally experienced Jesus's love in your pain?¹
3. What are some ways the "arm of the LORD" (i.e., God's power) has shown up in your life in the last month? What was the result of this happening?

PRAYER

Theologian Richard Sibbes wrote, "When [a Christian] is conquered by some sins, he gets victory over others more dangerous, such as spiritual pride."² Use your prayer time to ask the Spirit to reveal sin in your life or to admit to God where you know you've fallen short.

Biblical passage to guide this prayer: James 5:16

¹ It's worth noting that when Jesus went out of His way to heal a broken and hurting man, much to the dismay of the spiritual leaders of His time, Matthew directed the attention of His readers to the first Servant Song in Isaiah 42 (see Matthew 12:9-21).

² Richard Sibbes, "The Bruised Reed," page 107.

GOOD FRIDAY

ISAIAH 53:4-9

Leader help: This section of the Holy Week guide is more devotional. If used in a group setting, consider using it as a prayer guide.

Using imagery from Israel's sacrificial system and looking ahead to the cross, Isaiah poetically explains the purpose of Jesus's suffering and death. Jesus took our misery and punishment on the cross, securing the way for us to be reconciled to God by faith in Him.

In the words of J. Alec Motyer,
*"The Servant lifts up and loads our needs on to himself, and [...] his sufferings were the penalty which he paid for our transgressions."*³

³ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, page 429.

1. **Read Isaiah 53:4.** Jesus knows what it's like to suffer, and to a degree that all who trust in Him will never have to know. Here, Isaiah tells us that Jesus lifted our burdens onto Himself. The author of Hebrews tells us why:

"He had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:17).

Though we still suffer illness, grief, and humiliation today, the ministry of Jesus gave us a peak at our coming future:

"And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him. That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: 'He took our illnesses and bore our diseases'" (Matt. 8:14-17).

Christian, where in your soul do you need God, through the Spirit, to bring the fresh, invincible hope of the gospel?

2. **Read Isaiah 53:5-6.** Some key terms will help us reckon with what Isaiah writes⁴:

Transgressions: "The deliberate flouting of the Lord and his law."

Iniquities: "Reflects the bentness or pervertedness of human nature, the result of the fall and the ever-flowing fount of sin."

Crushed: "Used of people being trampled to death" and "the infliction and enduring of crushing agonies ending in death."

If God's wrath was a rushing, violent stampede, Jesus picked us out of its path and took the crushing in our place so *that* we could be fully and permanently reconciled to God. Our sin put us in grave danger, but the Lord intervened out of sovereign love for us.

Jesus *"rises up and defends your case, based on the merits of his own sufferings and death."*⁵

Christian, ask God for renewed confidence in the sufficiency of Jesus and His pardon of you.

⁴ These definitions come from Motyer, page 430.

⁵ Dane Ortlund, Gentle and Lowly, page 91.

3. **Read Isaiah 53:7-9.** As Jesus was led to the cross, it looked as if He were at the mercy of a violent mob and an oppressive government, but “the theologically instructed eye saw the hand of the Lord fulfilling the Servant’s death as a sin-bearing exercise.”⁶

Jesus told the condemning governor, “*My kingdom is not of this world,*”⁷ and reminded His followers, “*Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?*”⁸

Jesus willingly fulfilled the Scriptures, which for centuries anticipated His suffering and death. The Word of God went silent in the face of His condemnation, knowing He was acting on behalf of sinners: “*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*”⁹

Christian, your heart is meant to be like dry soil that soaks up this unfathomable love, not concrete that lets it evaporate. Ask God to root you deeply in His love.

⁶ Motyer, page 432.

⁷ John 18:36.

⁸ Matt. 26:53.

⁹ 2 Cor. 5:21.

EASTER SUNDAY

ISAIAH 53:10-12

MAIN POINT

Jesus's crucifixion was primarily a guilt offering—the sinless, righteous Servant dying in the place of sinful people—that continues to be a rock-solid bridge between God and us. He accomplished everything He set out to do, including conquering death itself.

GROUP INTRO

Peeps, chocolate bunnies, or jelly beans — pick one and defend your choice.

TEXT

1. Read Isaiah 53:10. Despite Jesus's innocence (see verse 9), it was God's will to crush Him on the cross. Does this make God unjust? Why or why not?

Leader help: No. It was the Lord's will to crush Jesus because, in eternity past, the Father, Son, and Spirit committed to saving sinners in this way. Jesus willingly substituted Himself in our place (see vv. 7) on behalf of His people, as He testified (see John 10:17-18). God doesn't delight in crushing Jesus; He delights in Jesus's worthiness as the acceptable, willing sacrifice.

2. Read Isaiah 53:11. The reference to the Servant's "knowledge" reveals that Jesus knew exactly what to do in His ministry to achieve His desired results. According to this verse, what "results" did Jesus achieve?

Leader help: Isaiah writes that the Servant, through His ministry, would "make many to be accounted righteous," i.e. because Jesus perfectly fulfilled the demands of God's law and because Jesus took the penalty we deserve for breaking God's law, all who trust in Him are "accounted" or declared righteous in God's sight.

3. Read Isaiah 53:12. One theologian suggests that the first two stanzas should say, "I will apportion to him the many, and the strong he will apportion as spoil." This means that *"the Servant has received as his own all those ('the many') whom he died to save, and that he really is King of all kings."*¹⁰ So, how is Jesus rewarded for His obedient ministry? What does He receive from the Father?

Leader help: Jesus receives His people as His reward. This is precisely what Jesus said during His ministry in John 6:37-40. Christians are Jesus's reward for His obedience. He receives the people whom He loves and died for.

¹⁰ Motyer, page 443.

APPLICATION

1. If you trust Jesus, God Himself has declared you "righteous." You cannot diminish, remove, or undo this act of God. Why, then, do you personally struggle to have assurance of God's forgiveness and love?
2. Either the Servant took ALL the punishment for sin, or we are utterly hopeless. How do people try to add to or diminish the sufficiency of Jesus's death and resurrection?
3. When we had not even asked Him for help or known our sinfulness, Jesus stepped in and "carried our sorrows." How is this entirely different from our culture's response to those who suffer because of their own sins?

PRAYER

Richard Sibbes wrote, "If Christ be so merciful as not to break me, I will not break myself by despair, nor yield myself over to Satan to break me in pieces."

Praise God for His mercy, and ask God to make your group a place where we give the gospel, not condemnation, to each other.

Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Romans 6:8-11