

Easter (1988) - the Sorrows of Christ

by Mariano Di Gangi

Mariano Di Gangi's sermon explores the sorrows of Christ as depicted in Isaiah 53, emphasizing his humble origins, rejection, and the comfort he offers to believers in their suffering.

Duration: 32:08

Scripture: Isaiah 53:1

Topics: "Sorrow"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the message of the prophet Isaiah in chapter 53. The passage describes a figure who is humble, unattractive, and familiar with suffering. The preacher emphasizes the contrast between the beauty of those who bring good news and the rejection of the message they proclaim. Despite proclaiming the salvation of God, the messengers find that their message is not believed and the power of God's arm is not revealed to the people.

Transcript

Our text is taken from the book of the Prophet Isaiah, the 53rd chapter, reading the first three verses. Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not. These words follow upon what is written in the 52nd chapter of Isaiah at verse 7. How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim to Zion, salvation, your God reigns.

And we can imagine apostles, prophets, evangelists, filled with the Spirit, treasuring the Word of God, anxious to share the good news, eager to announce the Lord's salvation to sinners who deserve naught but judgment at God's hand. And they proclaim the good news, they announce the salvation of our God, and they discover to their dismay that the message is rejected. We have brought good tidings, we have proclaimed peace, we have announced salvation, we have delivered the message that the Lord laid upon our heart, we have brought this for the benefit of our hearers, and now we are compelled to ask ourselves, in view of the comparatively meager response to our ministry, Lord, who has believed our report? Lord, to whom has your arm been revealed? We have proclaimed the good news and people have refused to receive it.

We have declared your truth and men and women have refused to believe it. To whom has your arm been revealed? Who has had an experience of the power of your gospel when it was proclaimed to them? They have heard it with their ears, but their hearts have been deaf to it. Your arm has been revealed in power, the power of your grace to save, but they haven't experienced it.

Why has this happened? And then Isaiah, led by the Holy Spirit, illumined by the Spirit of God, answers the questions that he has been raising. And the reason why the message has not been believed, and the reason why people have not experienced the revelation of God's saving power, is because the Christ, the Messiah, whom they have preached, is one who does not conform to the preconceived notions and the prejudices of men and women. He simply is not the one they are looking for.

Consider, for example, his humble origins. He grew up before him like a tender shoot and like a root out of dry ground. We Canadians love our forests.

We may take them for granted, but we love them all the same. A soaring spruce, a tall pine, a majestic cedar, these are magnificent. And the viewing of Western Canada in connection with the Winter Olympics has reminded us of the beauty of nature and the stateliness of the trees that people our landscapes.

And yet, the Messiah of whom the prophets and apostles and evangelists preach is like a tender plant, not a magnificent and impressive tree. As a matter of fact, the great tree of the house of Royal David has been cut down and the stump that remains is in a state of decadence. And out of that decaying stump of a fallen tree of the house and lineage of David, a tender shoot springs forth, but lacking the magnificence and the splendor of royalty.

He is like a tender shoot that comes out of the decadent trunk of a once mighty tree. He is like a root out of dry ground. He is surrounded by a most unpromising environment.

Where is he from? He's from Nazareth. Can any good thing really come out of a place like that? He is poor. He is obscure.

The foxes of the field have holes in which they can burrow. The birds of the air have nests in which they can rest, but he does not even have a place whereon to lay his head. He is vulnerable to the onslaughts of the world.

He is hardly the sort of person at whom you would look and say, here's the wonderful counselor. Here's the mighty God. We discern in him the father of eternity.

We see in him the prince of peace. As a matter of fact, they would say, we know all about him. We know that his legal guardian, his father, is a carpenter.

We know his mother. We know his brothers. We know his sisters.

Where does he come off with that kind of display of authority to tell us anything? A tender shoot from the stump of a fallen tree, once noble and proud. A root out of dry ground. Obscurity, poverty, vulnerability belong to him who has believed our report? To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? What is it about him that has not made him attractive? The lowliness of his beginnings.

More than that, consider his external appearance. We are told that he had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him. There was nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

There is no imposing facade with Jesus of Nazareth. He doesn't have riches to dispense to buy the votes of the people and gain popularity. He doesn't have palaces in which to dwell so that the lesser breeds might be suitably impressed by his opulence.

He doesn't have armies at his disposal to terrorize, to subdue, and to pacify the landscape. There is nothing in his external appearance that would compel people to give him their allegiance and willingly surrender their obedience. They interpret his meekness as weakness.

What else do you expect in a world that thinks that violence alone is true strength? They misinterpret his authority as tyranny. What else do you expect in a world which equates anarchy with freedom? They think of his purity as prudery. What else can one expect in a world where only sensuality and lust are equated with love? They are blind to his deity.

They are blind to his moral excellence. They don't perceive in him the beauty of holiness, and the reason for it is that Satan, the god of this world, has blinded their minds lest they should see what he is really all about and be drawn irresistibly to him. These were people who did not see in Jesus the glorious of the only begotten, full of grace and resplendent with truth.

They were not attracted to him. There was nothing in his external appearance that would compel them to follow him, but then there was always that minority that saw beyond the appearances and understood his true character. On my first trip to northern India, I visited the border area where many Tibetan refugees had sought political asylum.

On that occasion, I met the wife of the treasurer of the Dalai Lama, who took me through to see the various hostels that had been set up to house, to feed, and to educate these thousands of Tibetan refugees. And then, descending from those peaks down into the valley and up again on the other side, I came to a very modest hostel where some Tibetan children had been taken in, fathered and mothered by godly parents who adopted them as their very own. And on the wall of that hostel, I saw a New Testament question and an Old Testament answer.

The question on the plaque was, what think ye of Christ? And the answer to this question from the 22nd chapter of Matthew was immediately following, drawn from the fifth chapter of the Song of Solomon. He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved.

This is my friend. What those who have been blinded by Satan, the god of this world, can never see, those who are regenerated by the Holy Spirit do perceive, and they find in Jesus Christ all that they will ever need in this world and in the next. Lord, who has believed our report? To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Not to the majority that was not drawn to him because of his external appearance, not to that majority that would not follow one whose origins were so obscure and poverty-ridden.

But there's a third reason why they have despised and rejected the message. It's because they have despised and rejected the Messiah, who is the heart of the message. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering, and like one from whom men hid their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

The overwhelming tide, and that tide was fed by a multitude of tributaries, each beginning with a trickle, each running more rapidly, each swelling the tide until it overwhelmed him and made him a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And a world of secular humanism and a world of sensual hedonism will

have nothing at all of that kind of Jesus. Consider some of the streams that combined and conspired to create an overwhelming tide of suffering and sorrow for Jesus.

To begin with, there was the ingratitude of the crowd, possibly some of the very people for whom he had multiplied loaves and fishes, possibly some of the people who had seen him open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, and loose the tongues of the dumb, certainly people who acclaimed him on that Palm Sunday as the Blessed One who comes in the name of the Lord and who is going to be our Savior, and then manipulated by ruthless demagogues. They show their ingratitude to him, turn against him, and would rather see the release of a cutthroat criminal like Barabbas and let Jesus die. Surely he is a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief because of the ingratitude of the masses, fickle in their loyalty, swayed by unscrupulous men.

Another stream that contributes to the overwhelming tide of his sorrow, in addition to the ingratitude of the masses, is the misunderstanding of his family. They were related to him by ties of flesh and blood, but they had no part in his kingdom. They were as yet unconverted.

Only after the Resurrection, when he appeared to them, did brothers like James and Jude cast in their lot with him and receive him as their Messiah, their Savior, and their Lord. They thought of him as a raving fanatic. They thought of him as a megalomaniac.

They thought of him as one who was beside himself. They wanted him to cease and desist this pouring out of his energies for the healing of the sick and the teaching of the unlearned. They simply did not appreciate him, and their misunderstanding must have hurt him terribly and entered into the swelling tide of his grief.

Then you have the hostility of the hierarchy. Isn't it strange that professional religionists, down through the centuries, have been among the most inveterate opponents of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? The hostility of the hierarchy. Caiaphas, Annas, the families of the high priest, the scribes who knew the Scriptures but did not recognize the Word made flesh, the priests who performed the rituals and failed to appreciate the Lord of the Temple.

Jesus had a parable about these men. It's one of the most terrifying stories in the entire Bible, and you find it at the beginning of Mark chapter 12, that a landlord who cared for his vineyard and bestowed upon it all his love, coming to the time of harvest, sends his servants, and these are treated with repeated cruelty. And then at the last he says, I will send them no longer my servants, I will send them my son.

Surely they will revere and respect him. And when he appears, the fire of their animosity is kindled to the greatest of intensity, and they take him and they slay him. The hostility of the hierarchy.

Men of religion who should have known better but did terribly. That hurt Jesus. What about the contempt of a man like Herod? Superstitious, sensual, shallow Herod, who at the time that Jesus is on trial for his life, sends for Jesus not to inquire as to the innocence or the guilt of the prisoner, but to get him to do some tricks, perform, do something spectacular.

Dazzle my eyes. I want to see you do the sensational. And Jesus must have groaned and wept within him.

In the presence of a contemptuous, sensual, superstitious buffoon. And then you have the expediency of Pontius Pilate. The man delegated by Rome to be the symbol of imperial law and justice.

It's fascinating to study Pontius Pilate and his footwork in the passion narratives of the gospel. This has been pointed out by several great scholars of the New Testament. You'll notice that he goes restlessly from one group to another.

He knows what he should do and he's unwilling to do it because it's going to be too costly. He speaks to the prisoner. He goes out to try to placate the crowd.

He goes back to the prisoner. He is unresolved. He goes back to the crowd.

He shifts backward and forward and if you trace the footwork of Pontius Pilate, you'll see a man who is driven resistlessly by his own lack of moral principle. Seeking to placate the people and seeking at the same time to save a prisoner whom he knows is totally innocent. And he ends up by giving the people what they want.

And he who is king of kings and Lord of lords must have groaned and grieved within him at the travesty of justice on the part of one who represented imperial law. Another stream that fed the overwhelming tide of the grief and sorrow of Jesus was the mockery of the soldiers. They had their sport with him.

They would get some enjoyment out of this prisoner by tormenting him. They would clothe him with a scarlet rag and put a reed in his hand and then bow the knee before him and betray not only their anti-semitism but their hatred of gentle Jesus calling him a fit king for these Jewish rabble. And you call yourself a prophet? We'll blindfold you.

We'll buffet you. Use your prophetic gifts and tell us who did it. And this added to his grief.

Two men are crucified along with him and they both begin by cursing their fate and reviling the one who hangs between them. And this too must have added grief to the heart of Jesus. Here are men who are only a breath away from eternity.

Here are men who were about to die and instead of making their peace with God they are cursing the Prince of Peace and the Lord of Life. He grieved over the city of Jerusalem, the city that he loved as any true Israelite would love it. The city that he came to save, the city whose sovereign he was, the city that refused to recognize him when he came.

And Jesus looking over the city of Jerusalem weeps because of what it was doing to him and what it was doing to itself. It was sick with a mortal plague and he alone was the great physician and could give the remedy of redemption for its healing. And now they were about to kill the physician in whom was the secret of their salvation.

But the end is not yet. The flood has not yet crested. There are other tributaries to be added to the grief and the sorrow of Jesus.

And this comes from his own professed followers. One of whom betrays him. Another denies him.

And all of them forsook him and fled. How the heart of Jesus grieves when those who have preached his gospel in crusades involving tens of thousands of people commit the most gross and flagrant and sensational deeds of immorality. All the suffering of Jesus on the part of a hostile hierarchy.

All the suffering of Jesus on the part of a mindless crowd that became a manipulated mob. All the suffering of Jesus that came from crude, rude, Gentile soldiers could not have hurt him as much as the sins of those

who professed to follow him and betrayed him and denied him and forsook him. God forbid that we who bear the name of Jesus should by our individual acts of sin or a pattern of habitual unrepentant sin add to his grief.

Lift the level of his overwhelming sorrow and add pain to his pain. Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He is obscure. He is poor.

He is vulnerable. He is not externally impressive and he is overwhelmed by sorrow. This is the kind of leader that our world simply does not want.

It despises him. It rejects him still and yet from all this we can draw the sweetest consolations. For one thing, he can sympathize with us when we experience grief, when we are overwhelmed with sorrow, when we are unjustly accused, when our motives may be misinterpreted.

He was tempted. He was tried. He was tested in all points like we are, yet without sin.

And he can understand and he can sympathize and in our moments of loneliness and even abandonment we can turn to him and trust in his full sympathy and understanding. More than that, because he was willing to take the cup of sorrow and of grief and of suffering, because he was willing to be despised and rejected, you and I can find acceptance with God in his beloved son and we can experience the joy of the salvation he came to bring. Despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, but for those of us who understand what he is really all about, a man of sorrows who was the secret of our consolation and the bringer of our immortal joy.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for sending the suffering servant, Jesus Christ, to be our Savior. We thank you for the words of prophets and apostles and evangelists who have, under the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit, portrayed Jesus before the eyes of our understanding.

Help us to see in him a matchless beauty that in a world that still despises and rejects him, we may find him altogether lovely, our friend, our beloved Lord. In his name we ask it. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/26/SID26724.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/mariano-di-gangi/easter-1988-the-sorrows-of-christ/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net