

Easter (1988) - the Sovereignty of Christ

by Mariano Di Gangi

The sermon explores the sovereignty of Christ through the lens of his sufferings, highlighting the mystery of his sufferings and the marvel of his glory.

Duration: 32:30

Scripture: Isaiah 53:3, Isaiah 53:10-12, Matthew 27:21-22, Romans 8:17, Hebrews 12:1

Topics: "Sovereignty"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the power of faith and the endurance of heroic men and women who have overcome challenges to proclaim the gospel. The preacher highlights examples from different parts of the world, such as New Guinea and Latin America, where people have found hope and peace through their faith in Jesus. The sermon also draws parallels to the story of Joseph in the Old Testament, emphasizing how God can turn evil intentions into good outcomes. Ultimately, the preacher emphasizes the significance of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, stating that through his redemption, people from all tribes and tongues can be set free from sin and serve God with a willing heart.

Transcript

Reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah in the 53rd chapter, beginning at verse 10. Sunday by Sunday, leading up to Good Friday and Easter, we have been reading and studying together the 53rd chapter of Isaiah the prophet. We have seen there the powerful portrait of the suffering servant of the Lord.

We have seen Jesus in this scripture. And now this evening we come to the great conclusion of the chapter in Isaiah 53, beginning at verse 10. I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong.

Because he poured out his life unto death and was numbered with the transgressors, for he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors. This is a passage of scripture in which we have a description of the mystery of the sufferings of Christ. And we also have note of the marvel of his glory.

Roman Catholicism has stressed the sufferings of Christ but not his glory. And certain types of Protestantism have rejoiced in the resurrection but without the shadow and the pain and the bloodshed of the cross. Biblical Christianity at its best takes seriously what the prophets and the apostles have said concerning the sufferings of our Savior and his glory which followed.

And we need to have the whole picture in order to appreciate Christ as he is set forth in scripture. This is a passage that tells us something about the mystery of his sufferings. For in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, the sufferings of the servant of the Lord, the sufferings of Jesus Christ, are related to man, related to God, and related to the servant himself.

There's no doubt about the fact that according to the prophet Isaiah, the sufferings of the Messiah were related to the wickedness of men. Think back over the chapter. The words of it are familiar to us all.

In Isaiah 53 verse 3, he was despised and rejected of men. They are the ones who despised him. They are the ones who rejected him.

They are the ones who said, give us Barabbas, a man like ourselves. As for Jesus, let him be executed. According to Isaiah 53.3, we esteemed him not.

It is we, blinded by Satan, the God of this world, who fail to appreciate the moral excellence and glory of Jesus Christ, so that instead of saying that he is worth everything, we estimated him to be worth only the price of a mutilated slave, 30 pieces of silver. According to Isaiah 53 verses 4 and following, he was wounded and he was bruised, and it was men who did the wounding and men who did the bruising. In Isaiah 53 verse 7, he was oppressed and he was afflicted.

And those who oppressed him and those who afflicted him were men. It was men who scourged him. It was men who mocked him.

It was men who blindfolded him. It was men who beat upon him and said, tell us who did it. It was men who spat upon his face.

It was men who plucked at his beard. The sufferings of the Messiah related to the brutality and the sinfulness of man. According to Isaiah 53.8, he was thrust into prison.

He was condemned as a criminal and he was cut off from the land of the living. And this was done by men. He is the victim of a violent death and this is the doing of man.

But if that is all we see in the crucifixion of Jesus, moving as it is, we are lacking a tremendous dimension that is often overlooked. It was not merely what men did to him, but the part that God the Father played in all of this. Maybe it's because this is unpleasant.

Maybe it's because it runs counter to our sentimentalizing of the deity that God is love, that we do not take seriously how the Holy God views sin, because this comes to sharp focus, to burning intensity at the cross. It's not only sinners who had a hand in the death of Jesus, but in some strange, mysterious way, the Father was involved as well. Isaiah 53, verse 10, it pleased the Lord to bruise him.

It pleased the Lord to bruise him. That is what the prophet says. Again, in Isaiah 53, verse 10, the Lord put him to grief.

The Lord put him to grief. That's what the prophet said. And this is no isolated instance, for if we go back in the earlier part of the chapter, in Isaiah 53, verse 6, we read that all we like sheep had gone astray.

We had turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. That is what led Jesus to cry out that voice of dereliction still resounding in the corridors of time, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? I can understand the chief priests and the scribes turning against me. I can

understand the crowd being fickle and deserting me.

I can even get over the heartbreak of a disciple who betrays me and another who denies me. I can understand why, under pressure, they all forsook me and fled, but why hast thou forsaken me? The Lord bruised him. The Lord put him to grief.

The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. And so we see brought together at Calvary the wickedness of men and the will of God. We're reminded of the story of Joseph in the Old Testament, how that his brothers sought to murder him and then decided to profit from him by selling him into slavery, and how Joseph eventually ends up in an Egyptian prison, and how Joseph in the providence of God is led to rise to a point next to Pharaoh himself, and how through a long, complicated process, which is one of the most dramatic in the Bible, the brothers who sought to murder him find themselves totally dependent on him to be spared from dying of hunger.

And Joseph looks at his brothers and he says, you meant it for evil. God overruled it and turned it to good. You men with wicked hands, said Peter on the day of Pentecost, took him and you slew him.

He being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God died at the cross. We need to keep both aspects of the death of Jesus before us, else we are missing an important dimension if all we think of is what men did to Jesus and what a holy God did when he bruised him, when he put him to grief, and when he laid on him the iniquity of us all. But there's a further dimension to all this.

The servant who suffers is also involved, for he willingly undertook the work of our redemption. The Puritan divines, for this reason, used to refer to Jesus by a title that to us seems very strange. They used to refer to Jesus as the undertaker of our salvation.

Why? Because when there was need of someone to atone for sin, because when the necessity arose for blood to be shed so that sin could be remitted, he was willing to undertake the task, no matter what the cost. And Jesus stresses this very thing in the Gospels over and over again. I am the good shepherd.

The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. No man in the final analysis takes my life from me. I, of myself, lay it down and I have power to take it up again.

And here we are told in Isaiah 53 10, that he willingly made his soul an offering for sin. Willingly did he give himself as a sin offering, as a trespass offering, to recompense to the Holy Father on behalf of those who had defrauded him. Of what have we defrauded God? Of faith in his word, responding to the truth of the Bible with doubt and with unbelief? Of what have we defrauded and deprived God? Of obedience when he speaks to us in terms of command? Of what have we deprived him? Of the worship of which he alone is worthy? What have we withheld from him? The love that he deserves as the God of our creation and the God of sustaining providence and the God of all comfort and grace? We owe God a debt that we can never pay, and he willingly made his soul an offering for sin to recompense God for all that wherein we had defrauded him.

And the author puts it yet another way in the 12th verse of this chapter. He bore the sin of many. The apostle Peter was struck with this, and he took the quotation from Isaiah, and he interwove it with what he had to say in his first epistle, chapter 2 and verse 24.

He bore, willingly bore, in his own body the penalty of our sin on the tree. That is the right understanding of the mystery of the sufferings of Jesus. Men were involved.

They did it with wickedness. God was involved to fulfill his plan that the just should die for the unjust and cancel their condemnation. And he himself entered willingly into it, giving his life an offering for sin, willing to bear in his own body the penalty of our sins on that accursed tree.

He was willing to die for us. Are we willing to live for him? The mystery of his sufferings. But then the prophet goes on to speak about the marvel of his glory, and he turns our eyes from the Christ who suffers on account of sin, to the Christ who is elevated to sovereignty because he has suffered for the sins of the world.

And we are told in one of the historic translations of this text that he sees his seed and he prolongs days. You ever thought of what those words mean? Recall what Jesus said in the 12th chapter of the gospel, according to John. He said a seed, as long as it lives by itself, is only a seed.

But when that seed falls into the furrowed earth, when that seed dies and is buried, then with the coming of the springtime, with sunshine and rain, that seed, which was all by itself, willing to die in the heart of the earth, multiplies itself with the growth of new life. Jesus is that seed that is sown. Jesus is that seed that is willing to die.

Jesus is that seed that is willing to be buried in the earth in order to come to new life. For himself and for all his people. He shall see his seed.

He shall see the spiritual posterity that grows out of his willingness to die and to be buried. He will be the firstborn among many brethren and they will bear his likeness and they will wear his image. He shall see his seed.

He shall see the vital results of his voluntary and vicarious death. He shall prolong days. Not only does he prolong his own life beyond Calvary, rising from the dead on the third day, but he prolongs the lives of others.

I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord Jesus. He that believeth in me shall never die. Jesus lives.

He who was dead is now alive forevermore. And because he lives, we too shall live. He sees his seed multiplied through his sacrifice.

And he prolongs days beyond the valley of the shadow of death. Life, life that is new, life that is eternal. He sees it and rejoices in it.

The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. What is the pleasure of the Lord? He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. As I live, saith the Lord, through the prophet Ezekiel, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he turn from his evil way and live.

The pleasure of the Lord is that men and women should come to experience new life and make a fresh start and live in the power of an endless life. And the pleasure of the Lord, the grand design of a God who does not want death to be the last word, is a design, is a plan that prospers in his hand. Through the saving work of Jesus, God's gracious plan of commuting, communicating life to those dead in trespasses and sins is brought to pass and finds glorious fulfillment.

He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied. There's an interesting passage at the start of the twelfth chapter of the letter to the Hebrews. We all know the beginning of that chapter, but do we know

what comes in the second verse of that chapter? Seeing then that we are encompassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, of heroic men and women who show us that it is possible in the power of faith to endure and survive and win.

Let us lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us and let us do what they did and run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher of that kind of faith. And then comes the part we often neglect, looking unto Jesus, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despised its shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God. Have you ever thought of the fact that Jesus, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross and despised its shame? He sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied he looks at the garden of Gethsemane with its agony and sweat drops of blood.

He looks back on Calvary and the excruciating pain that he suffered there and he looks at what his suffering has brought about and he rejoices in it. Jesus sees of the travail of his suffering soul and is satisfied. He looks down from heaven at men and women who had been numbered among tribes of headhunters who today love the Lord Jesus and proclaim his gospel in New Guinea and he is satisfied.

He looks at masses of people without hope who in Latin America have found the true revolution that brings peace and righteousness and he is satisfied. He looks at what used to be called the dark continent of Africa and he sees that if present trends continue that continent by the year 2000 south of the Sahara will be predominantly Christian. He sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied.

It was worth it all, Gethsemane and Calvary. To redeem out of every tribe and tongue and kindred and people upon the face of the earth men and women who being set free from their sins will be at liberty to serve God with a willing heart. By his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many.

Men may consider him a criminal and execute him but God knows that he is the righteous one. Not a single commandment of the father has he broken. Everything that is according to the father's will he has gladly and perfectly fulfilled.

He is the righteous one. He has standing before God. You and I do not because we are guilty sinners.

We are under God's judgment but if we know God's righteous servant, if we become acquainted with him, if we acknowledge our guilt and claim his righteousness, if we acknowledge that we deserve to be condemned but we acknowledge that he has standing with God, then his righteousness becomes ours and his standing is shared with us and we who were guilty and condemned are acquitted and we can have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. To know God's righteous servant, to trust in God's righteous servant, to look upon him as the Savior that we need, that is the way for us to be justified, that is the way for us to be pardoned, that is the way for us to be acquitted, that is the way for us to be accepted with God. If we don't know Jesus we are still condemned and in our sin but if we know God's righteous servant, then his righteousness becomes the seamless robe that covers the nakedness of our souls and makes us acceptable in the eyes of a holy God.

One thing more, because he has poured out his soul as an offering for sin, because he was willing to be numbered with the transgressors, because he bore the sin of many, because he made intercession for the transgressors, therefore as a consequence, as a reward that he fully deserved, God has highly exalted him and numbered him among the strong and given him the spoils of his victory. And this is what is taught throughout the New Testament. You know the passage in Philippians chapter 2, that the Jesus who was

equal with God and made himself a man and became a servant and was obedient even to the death of the cross now has highly exalted, now he has been highly exalted and he is at the right hand of God and he is to be acknowledged as Lord.

Isn't this what Peter says in the first epistle that he writes in chapter 3, that the just died for the unjust to bring us back to God and now he is above all principalities and powers in highest heaven at God's right hand. Isn't this what the apostle John sees in the book of the revelation, a lamb that had been slain but now is enthroned upon the throne of the universe. God has highly exalted his suffering servant and made him Lord of all.

And therefore you and I must reckon with him. Apart from him, we can have no righteous standing before a holy God. Apart from him, there is no royalty worthy to command our allegiance for time and for eternity.

How we need to look at Jesus portrayed by the prophets, described by the apostles, held forth to us by the Holy Spirit in the scriptures that we might trust in his suffering and sacrifice and acknowledge our allegiance to his sovereignty and obey him with faithfulness until someday we behold him in all his glory face to face. Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, you saw us in our desperate need as sinners under the judgment of a holy God and you were willing to come down from heaven and to take your place alongside of each of us and to die in our stead.

Grant that we now with a holy resolve might take our stand beneath your cross and at your side, fighting against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and then at the last to hear your word of well done. Lord Jesus Christ, how can we ever thank you enough for what you have suffered and what you have sacrificed except by yielding ourselves and pledging to you our allegiance and rendering unto you a heartfelt obedience. This we ask for your own glory and the coming of your kingdom.

Amen.

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