

“A Jesus More Than We Expected”
Isaiah 53
Rev. Seth Richardson
June 25, 2017 • Evening Sermon

Prayer:

Father, we do want to see You Lord Jesus high and lifted up. We want to see You Lord Jesus exalted among the nations. Our hope and desire is to see Your fame made great and so let it be for Your glory and Your honor Father. Bless this time together in Your Word, in Christ’s Name, Amen.

My family loves a good story. Whether it’s a movie, a book or a family tale, we love a good story. One of the beloved stories my wife and I enjoyed early in our marriage is one that I think you may be familiar with and have enjoyed as well. The story is Anne of Green Gables. My daughter has recently found an interest in this story and so we have wanted to watch the new series that has come out on Netflix. I’m not going to give any spoilers or an endorsement either. We have enjoyed the show and will continue to watch it but it is difficult when they monkey around with the beloved characters.

In the story we were accustomed to there was Anne with her beautiful autumn hair who is spunky and witty. In the new series depicts Anne a bit differently. She has a haunted past and it a complex character and quite honestly she is a bit unkempt and homely. She is awkward and has a quirky personality. Because of that she becomes despised among her classmates. She is bullied, teased and rejected. In the original story Anne breaks the slate over Gilbert Blythe’s head but this goes far beyond that. She is an outcast but there is a strange turn of events that I found interesting.

In the middle of one evening, the alarm sounds and there is a fire in town. So her and her family rush into town to find that the very home of the children who had despised her most was ablaze. The men folk begin hastily putting out the fire by bringing in the water wagon. In the middle of trying to put this fire out something happens to the pump wagon where it malfunctions. It won’t operate and it seems certain that the house is going to go up in flames. It is then that Anne remembers something that she had read some years prior and so she rushes into the home. The house is full of flames and she begins to slam doors and shut windows because she had read that if you stop the airflow in a fire it will slow down the pace of the blaze and hopefully give them time to save and spare the house. Upon accomplishing her task she comes unscathed out of the home and there you find the sequence where the very one who was despised becomes the hero. The very one who is rejected in a sense becomes their savior. That is what we will see in Isaiah 53.

The section actually begins in Isaiah 52 but I will begin with Isaiah 53:1–2a which says *[1] Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? [2] For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground;...* This first portion opens depicting the Savior, the coming Messiah, as One who would come up as a root out of dry ground. We believe this is pointing to the coming of His Kingdom in obscurity. Think with me for a moment.

The Messiah would be born of pheasants in the town of Bethlehem. He would grow up in obscurity, quietly in the town of Nazareth. The King of all creation would live 30 of His 33 years in all but complete obscurity. Though it would be by His blood that He would purchase

men and women from every nation, at the time of His birth, death and even His resurrection He was completely and utterly unknown to most of the world. The Apostle Paul would often address the coming of the Messiah as a mystery. In Ephesians 3 and Colossians 1 he refers to it as the mystery, hidden for ages in the generations but now revealed to His saints.

The work of the Kingdom is often a quiet work. It is often clandestine, undercover, unnoticed primarily because most of us in the world simply don't have eyes to see. It is also because God does not count time the way that we do. Jesus taught this in Matthew 13. Notice how Christ in this parable of the Kingdom would explain the quiet work of the Kingdom.

Matthew 13:31–33 says [31] *He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. [32] It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."*

[33] *He told them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."*

Why is this important to us? In this year that we have been learning and fervently praying for revival it is important that while we pray for the swift work of God we have learned that revival is the extraordinary work of God through ordinary means and while we long to see Him bring revival, people come to Christ, justice in our nation and His glory, honor and fame spread to the ends of the earth, Satan is a judo warrior. Judo is a martial art where you use your opponents own momentum and weight to throw them.

So I have a concern. While we are fervently praying for revival if we're not careful we'll actually pray ourselves into disbelief. That may sound strange but in our heart it is our real desire to see God work mightily for His glory and honor. It's like my grandmother would say when she was cooking potatoes or noodles. She would say 'A watched pot never boils.' If you're like me the worst thing to do when you're trying to lose weight is to step on the scale every day. It never comes quickly enough, does it? But there have been times when you planted a shrub or tree in your yard and by the end of the summer you have noticed it has grown up right before you and now it's casting its shade. Or perhaps though you've been to all the birthdays of your grandchildren they grow up right before your eyes and you never really noticed.

So what does this mean? It doesn't mean that we pray less fervently, less expectantly or more dependently. There is a directly corollary by the awareness of our need and the fervency of our prayers to cultivate a heart for revival. Don't pray yourself into disbelief for whether Christ's Kingdom comes quickly or slowly it is promised and it will surely come. So we place our hope in Him. Let's go on in our text.

Isaiah 53:2b says [2b] *he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.* It's hard to know if Isaiah is speaking of the Messiah's physical appearance during His life or only the physical appearance of His death. I have wrestled with this notion but if Jesus were to show up and I didn't know it was Jesus would I welcome Him and engage Him in conversation? More importantly, am I willing to follow a Jesus who would actually make me feel uncomfortable? I know this sounds trite but could I follow a Jesus I might consider unhandsome or awkward? Could I follow a Jesus who didn't meet my standards?

While we can't say for sure that this is what the passage is saying we can know from this text the very personhood of our Lord Jesus challenges our very most precious animating values. In fact, His goodness, glory, power and might clothed in His humanity would cause us to be uncomfortable. I heard a story once that I'm not sure is true or not but I'd like to share it.

There was this proAm golf event where they paired professional PGA golfers with other amateurs. There was this one pro golfer known to be a womanizer and partier was paired with none other than Billy Graham. They began playing golf and even though this guy was a pro he began slicing and shanking the ball as he hit it. He was frustrated, nervous and anxious. After it was over and he got back to the locker room he was visibly frustrated. He threw his shoes and slammed down his gloves and one of his colleagues said 'hey man what's wrong.' He said 'it was that preacher.' 'What did he say, what did he do?' He said 'Nothing.' Just being in Billy Graham's presence made him uncomfortable.

If you can imagine the effect of being in Billy Graham's presence, just imagine the effect it would have upon us of being in our Lord Jesus' presence. The reality is that in my own heart I tend to gravitate toward pretty people. I'm uncomfortable around those who have little to offer me yet it says that Jesus had nothing in this world to attract us to Him. I find myself seeking my own comfort and Jesus was born in poverty. His first cradle was the feed trough of farm animals. I find myself constantly motivated to have nice things yet this Jesus never owned a house. Jesus is the suffering servant and I'm often most consumed by self-interest. Unless the Spirit of God turns us onto Jesus we would be completely turned off by Him. Unless He opens our minds and softens our hearts we would reject Him. That is exactly what we see in the next verse of Isaiah 53.

Isaiah 53:3 says [3] *He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.* The Messiah came in obscurity and though He was in the promised line He was not in the popular crowd. Though He wasn't voted class favorite there was nothing in Him that would attract us yet.

Isaiah 53:4–6 says [4] *Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.* [5] *But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.* [6] *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

I believe Isaiah here is using a God-inspired emotional ploy. He has just set up this Messiah who is rejected, despised and cast out and then he turns the tables by saying yet He has borne our grief. He would be the One who would suffer in our place. It was He who was stricken, smitten and afflicted. The One who was rejected would be their Savior. Let's look more closely at what this means.

Notice first that He bears our griefs. How does He bear our grief? Certainly this does not mean He removes our grief. He promised His Disciples that they would know sorrow. The Apostle Paul said in I Thessalonians that we were destined to suffer. Let's look at Romans 8. Romans 8:26 says [26] *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.* That is a familiar passage to many of us but notice the phrase 'groanings too deep for words.'

Here is an image of this. Imagine a pain or hurt in your life that is so deep that you are left with nothing but your sobbing. When is the last time that you wept? As you are experiencing the deep suffering of your soul, with tear stained eyes you lift your head and you see across the room a good friend and they are weeping just as loudly or even more sorrowful or more powerfully than you are weeping yet they are not weeping for their own pain but they are weeping for yours. How would that make you feel?

Here is the picture of the One who intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words and who understands for He is the One who is acquainted with grief and much sorrow. Not only do we have a Savior who bears our suffering and empathizes with our sorrow, we see that we have a Savior who bore our guilt for in Isaiah 53:5 it says He bears our sin. He bears our sorrows that we may be made whole again but He bears our guilt so that we may be made right again. What a Savior! So this brings us to the next section in Isaiah 53. Here we will see a dynamic turn as well.

Isaiah 53:7–9 says [7] *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. [8] By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? [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.*

Notice there is no complaining here. I love the dynamic nature of our Lord. There are these images in the New Testament where He confronts the religious elite, the cultural powerful and He stands in their face and says ‘You brood of vipers! You whitewash tombs. You are ignorant!’ We see images in the New Testament of Jesus methodically building a whip which He would take into the temple and overturn the tables of the money changers who were taking advantage of those who had come to worship. We see this powerful dynamic picture of Jesus and quite honestly I can get behind this Jesus. I like the Rambo Jesus, the Chuck Norris Jesus. That is the guy I can get behind but this Jesus makes me uncomfortable.

There is a term I love and it’s called the ‘cruciformed’ life. The cruciformed life is when our life takes the form of His death and so if this was the way He died it makes me nervous that this is the way He would call me to live. Here is one of my favorite definitions of humility; power under control. Philippians 2:8 says [8] *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

Satan is a judo warrior who uses our own momentum against us and so I have another fear in this year that we are praying for revival. We are praying so desperately that God would heal our land. Justice is rampant. Evil is before our eyes every day. God would You do something? As I am praying for revival and I’m watching the news or reading the newspaper or receiving tweets to see what is going on in the world, I get mad. I get angry. I believe we ought to get angry. In fact, I would argue that we’re not angry enough. If we’re not careful I fear our revival prayer would lead us to disbelief and to disdain. It is hard to love people I am angry at. When I’m mad at my children I don’t want to read bedtime stories. When I miffed at a co-worker I don’t want to go out for coffee. So while there is much need for righteous indignation we must take a posture that absorbs the wrath, the hurt and live a cruciformed life where our living takes the form of His dying.

I want to give you a silly illustration here of this. I love bird hunting and I am proud to say I successfully have trained two bird dogs. My dad was a dog man and I have had hunting dogs my whole life so I’d like to say I know a little bit about dogs. Recently a friend of mine asked me if I would watch his dog. All he wanted me to do was to go over in the morning and the evening to feed the dog, let him out to play and it would be fine. So my youngest daughter and I go over, open the door and we are greeted with teeth, a ferocious growl and unfurled hair standing up on the back of its neck. So I did what any qualified dog trainer would do and I left but I realized I would have to go back because I couldn’t leave this dog all weekend without being fed or letting it out.

So I'm driving over the next day still not certain what I'm going to do and I remembered what my dad had said some years ago. He said 'only scared dogs bite.' So I had a thought. I pulled into the drive-thru at McDonald's and I bought two sausage biscuits – one for me and one for the dog. As I go in the door I'm greeted the same way I was the first time as I look at this big dog that comes up to my waist and so I just sat down. I got a little lower than her level and I took a piece of the sausage from the biscuit and I threw it right at her feet. She was hesitant for a moment. She sniffed it and then she ate it. She looked at me still a bit uncertain about my motive here. So I tore off another piece and threw it a little closer to me and she waited but then she ate it. I did another piece and as she took her first step toward me I saw that her fear had turned to trust.

Now I also know that if a dog is trying to find their place in a pecking order and trying to show its dominance then you just show more power. You can stand down a dog and make it submissive just by having more authority but if you try to stand down a dog that is scared then you get bit. So on this day by building trust, getting on its level and by welcoming the one who was angry at me we began to build a relationship. So hear me when I say there is enough injustice in the world and the holy, righteous name of God is being so unfamed that we ought to be angry and even more angry but if our posture to the world is that of disdain we will never reach the ones were praying for God to revive. So that brings me to my last point.

Isaiah 53:10–12 says *[10] Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. [11] Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. [12] Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.*

What we see here is the glory on the other side of the suffering. We see the promises that Jesus will see His offspring and that God shall prolong his days. It was the Lord's will to prosper in His hand. Jesus will see the work that He has done and He'll be satisfied. The language here all points to the glory, blessing and the honor that Jesus will receive for being the suffering servant. I have a secret request which will not be secret much longer. I hope that in heaven that there is this movie screen, and maybe even a drive-in movie hopefully with popcorn and that we all get our own remote where we can flip to whatever scene in history that we would like to see, just to see what it was really like. I have a lot of things that I would like to see.

Some months ago this notion came into my mind where this is one scene that I would love to see. Here is Jesus who has lived for 33 years rejected, despised, cast out, wrongfully accused, tried before men, scorned by the people He loved, abandoned by His Disciples and friends, whipped, crucified, suffered in body and soul as He felt both the weight of our sins and the scorn of His beloved Father as bore the guilt of our transgressions, died and His soul was rendered from His body and people would turn their faces away. Imagine this.

Now imagine the first moment when He steps foot again in heaven and His eyes meet the Father's. Can you imagine the joy, the glory, knowing that He honored and pleased His Father and the delight of returning to glory for all eternity? Can you imagine the angels, the prophets, the saints of old and the hosts in heaven welcoming our Lord Jesus into heaven with shouts of praise, all glory and honor because He had suffered unto death for the sins of His people? Can you imagine what it will be like when He returns when the trumpet sounds and we behold Him in

the heavens? Though He was the One that everyone turned their faces away from every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord, at His return.

While He was despised and rejected we all will sing 'worthy O Lord are You for by Your blood You have purchased men and women from every tribe and nation.' The One who was scorned will be the most glorious. The One who was rejected will be the One most rejoiced in. The One who we hid our faces from will be the One we vast in His glory of the countenance of His face. Can you believe the joy and roar of the mighty and the beauty of the One who we rejected? So in conclusion we see a picture of the suffering Servant who will return in manifold power and utter beauty. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father we thank You. We confess that we don't see Jesus the way You do most often. Lord, we confess that we have made a God, a Jesus and Spirit in our image to do our bidding. Forgive us. Father, help us in our weakness but Lord may we glory in Your grace. May we delight in the reality that it is You that was chastised and has born our griefs, sorrows and sins so that we may offer our own lives for Your service. Give us that depth of joy in the Gospel, Lord Jesus. We love and thank You more than anything that You have loved us, in Your beautiful Son's Name, Amen.

Power Point

- A Jesus We Didn't Expect
- Bearing Our Sorrows and Our Sin
- The Death of the Innocent
- The Glory He is Due