

**Small Group Guide**  
**Do We Really Want to See Christ?**  
*Cleary Baptist Church April 10, 2011 Isaiah 53*

***Isaiah 52:13-53:12***

In John 12:21, a group of Greeks approach Philip and say, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” The term “see” means far more than to view merely with the eyes. It carries an investigative quality. The seekers wanted to discover what Jesus was all about. In verses 23-24, Jesus discloses to his disciples that He is all about bringing life through death. In order to understand Christ, then, we must seek to understand His death on the cross. In order to “see” Jesus, we must gaze at Him through a cross-shaped lens. Had the Greeks been privileged to read Isaiah 52:13-53:12 perhaps they would have already “seen” Jesus.

Today’s passage is a prophetic portrayal of the salvific death of Christ.

***Study the Text . . .***

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is one of several “servant songs” recorded in the book of Isaiah (see, 42:1-4; 44:1-5; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). Each servant song contains a series of meditations on the ministry of the “Servant of the LORD,” who is to be the Messiah. The climax of which comes in today’s text when he is depicted as a suffering servant. The passage begins by describing the destiny of the LORD’s servant. He shall act wisely and be exalted. The language “high and lifted up” is used elsewhere in Scripture only in reference to God Almighty. After affirming the glorious nature of the servant, Isaiah traces a consistent theme throughout this text by repeatedly emphasizing the servant’s repulsive appearance and pitiful state. Isaiah writes, “He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him” (52:2). Earlier, the servant seems to have been beaten beyond human semblance (51:14). Yet, in the passage where Isaiah describes Christ’s suffering and shame, he also affirms His glory. The unattractive, suffering servant will prosper, be satisfied, and vindicated (53:10-12). This text, then, provides a cross-section of suffering and glory.

Suffering and glory seem antithetical. How can a person’s suffering be considered glorious? The answer is dependent upon the identity of the one who is suffering. If the suffering person is the “servant of the LORD” and his suffering accomplishes the will of the LORD (v. 10), then it cannot be anything less than glorious. This is the strange, theological interplay resident in today’s passage. Suffering is nothing to be desired, yet we read that “it was the will of the LORD to crush” the suffering servant (53:10). Glory is supposed to be attractive, yet we read that the suffering servant “had no form or majesty that we should look at him and no beauty that we should desire him” (53:2). Suffering and glory, then, are not antithetical in God’s redemptive economy. They are essential components in God’s salvific purpose.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- What does the language of “high and lifted up” and “exalted” reveal about the servant?
- Where else is such language found in the book of Isaiah?
- How is Christ’s suffering described in this passage?
- How is Christ’s glory described in this passage?
- What other texts speak of the interplay of suffering and glory in the life of Christ? In the life of the Christian? (i.e. John 12:23-26; 2 Corinthians 4)
- Study today’s passage in light of John 12.

### ***More Group Discussion . . .***

- What do we find attractive?
- Would we have found Jesus attractive? Why or why not?
- Is it good to suffer? Why or why not?
- What would we describe as being glorious? Why?
- What does seeing Christ’s death and suffering reveal about the nature of our sin?
- What is the relationship between suffering and glory in the life of Christ?
- What is the relationship between suffering and glory of the life of the Christian?

## **We Rejected Christ**

### ***Study the Text...***

Isaiah 53:1-6 describes the servant’s rejection. Verse 1 is a rhetorical question. The arm of the LORD is a figure of speech referring to God’s salvific activity. To not believe God’s Word is to reject God’s salvation. In John 12:38, Jesus quotes this passage when describing the people of Israel’s unbelief. They rejected Him and in so doing they rejected salvation. Here, the prophet Isaiah predicted such a response.

Isaiah identifies himself with the people who rejected the servant. Notice the use of the inclusive “our” and “we” in vv. 4-6. The inference is that those of us who read the text today are also included. *We* rejected the servant. *We* esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. *We* did not believe he represented the LORD because of his pitiful appearance. He seemed to be a cursed man rather than the blessed servant of the LORD.

Yet, the cursed appearance of the servant was a reflection of our cursed condition. The grief he bore was *our* grief! This is a picture of the empathetic nature of Christ. The iniquities that were placed upon him were *our* iniquities! This is a picture of the substitutionary nature of Christ’s death. Though we are described as behaving like sheep Christ is described as the spotless lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (v.6; John 1:29)

- Underline the inclusive language peppered throughout the entire passage.
- What does it mean for the servant to have “borne our grief” and “carried our sorrows”? (v.4)
- What does it mean for the servant to bear our iniquities?
- What benefits did we receive because he was crushed and chastised

### **Group Discussion . . .**

- What does it mean to empathize?
- How does Christ empathize with our fallen condition?
- What does it mean for us to turn our own way? How does Christ fulfill the role as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world?
- What kind of peace and healing did Christ bring?

### **Christ Gave Himself Up**

#### **Study the Text . . .**

In verses 7-11, Isaiah anticipates further Christ's innocence and accentuates His compliance. What is implied about his innocence in verses 4-6 is made explicit in verse 9. He was accounted among the wicked though he himself was not wicked. Even more astonishingly, we read here of his willful compliance. Not once did he speak up in his own defense. Often times we think about Jesus' death as if he was a victim but what we find here is that he was a volunteer.

- What language is used to describe Jesus' innocence?
- What language is used to describe Jesus' compliance?
- Read John 18:28-40
- What is significant about Jesus being accounted among the wicked?

### **Group Discussion...**

- Was Jesus a victim or a volunteer?
- What's significant about identifying the difference between Jesus being a volunteer rather than a victim?
- Why is Jesus' innocence important for our salvation?
- What does Jesus' compliance teach us about the nature of grace?

### **God's Will and Christ's Satisfaction**

#### **Study the Text...**

Read vv. 10-12. Though Christ suffered and died in the place of sinners, he did not suffer and die according to the purpose of sinners. Verse 10 clearly states that Christ was crushed according to the will of God. God offered Christ to Himself as a guilt offering. Most of the offerings of the Old Testament were not totally consumed by fire. They would be partially burned up and then the rest would be eaten. The one exception was the guilt offering. It was the only offering to be totally consumed. The guilt offering was the only such offering that could atone for sin (see Lev. 5:16, 18; 7:7). Christ was *the* guilt offering. His death atones for sin and enables sinners to stand guiltless before God.

Once Christ atones for sin, he is then "satisfied" (v. 11). He accomplished the LORD's will and is satisfied. His suffering and death made many "to be accounted righteous." After suffering and dying, Isaiah ends the chapter by commenting on Christ's intercessory work.

Christ intercedes for the sinners he saves through his suffering.

- Examine the nature of the guilt offering in Leviticus 5 and 7.
- What does it mean "to be accounted righteous?"
- What is intercession?
- Examine Hebrews 7:25

### ***Group Discussion...***

- Why did Christ die?
- How does verse 10 affect your understanding of God's will?
- What does it mean to be guilty?
- What are we guilty of?
- How does Christ's death remove our guilt?
- What does it mean "to be accounted righteous"?
- How does knowing Christ removed our guilt enable us to move forward from past disobedience?
- How does knowing Christ removes our guilt empower future obedience?
- How does knowing Christ removes our guilt encourage us to respond to sins committed tomorrow?
- How does Christ's death and subsequent intercessory ministry highlight the necessity of evangelism?