

# Keynotes from Pastor Tim's am Sermon on 16/08/2020

## Mini Series - Trusting God in the darkness

### “Knowing God's love and loving God”

**Isaiah 52:13-53:12** Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. <sup>14</sup>As many were astonished at you—his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—<sup>15</sup>so shall he sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of him, for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand. Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? <sup>2</sup>For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. <sup>3</sup>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.<sup>4</sup> Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup>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? <sup>9</sup>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.<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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.

Puritan writer Samuel Bolton states that 'Death is the godly man's wish'. That seems a shocking statement, but Paul says this in **Philippians 1:23**: My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. For Paul, death would bring him into the presence of Jesus, and that would be far better than life on earth, fruitful though his ministry was. Throughout the centuries, God's people have discovered that their love for Jesus was greater than their love for this life, and they were happy to let go of this world to be with Jesus.

**How do we come to a place where we love Jesus to such an extent that we can think as Paul did?**

We do this by spending time with Jesus and hearing him say in his word 'I love you'. Our love for Jesus is a supernatural response to his love for us, and as the Spirit works in our hearts to convince us of that very real eternal love, then we will come to love Jesus more, even to the point where we can identify with Paul.

The place where we see God's love for us most fully demonstrated is in the cross of Christ, and this fourth servant song describes the cross in vivid detail to enable us to see that great love. **The very heart of this song speaks of God rescuing us from sin, by satisfying his own justice in his own sacrificial death.** In **Isaiah 53:4-6**, we see supremely the love of Father, Son and Spirit for us. We will never find this sort of love shown to us by anyone else, or through anything else. To really see God's love, we need to consider three aspects of the servant's suffering on our behalf that ought to cause us to stand amazed.

### **1. Stand amazed at the servant's rejection. Isaiah 53:1-3**

Jesus didn't fit with what the people thought the Messiah should be so they didn't believe the message about him (**v1**). They were disappointed because they wanted a Messiah who was more spectacular:

- His birth and early life looked unimpressive (**v2a**) – he was just a carpenter's son from Nazareth

- as he grew up, people only saw a human being (v2b) – he seemed unlikely to be able to save them from their Roman rulers

**They didn't have eyes to see that he was eternal God come from heaven to take human flesh nor were they able to see his majesty, as of the only Son begotten of the Father.**

They rejected him, refusing the help of the arm of God. That failure to see the real Jesus is a universal failure and affects us all.

**How does anyone come to believe in Jesus?** The key to seeing the true Jesus is in the question in v1 - to whom has the arm of the Lord been **revealed**? It is the revelation of God to our hearts. There can be no true understanding of this servant by human observation alone. God needs to speak spiritual light into our hearts so that we come to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:6). If you have come to see the worth, majesty and beauty of Jesus Christ, it is because God has revealed him to you.

**That is the love of God the Father to you – by his Spirit he has opened the eyes of your heart to see the real Jesus. How can you not love the God who has done this miracle for you?**

## **2. Stand amazed at the servant's oppression. Isaiah 53:7-8**

700 years before Jesus walked the earth, Isaiah talks about his trial and the injustice of the court. It is clear that Jesus was innocent of any crime (v9). He is God's righteous servant, yet he was condemned to death. The people God had ordained to ensure justice was done denied Jesus any justice.

As High Priest, Caiaphas:

- Was God's representative on earth to mediate for the people
- Had knowledge of God's law, and would have known that he required justice, yet together with his father-in-law, brought in false witnesses to lie about Jesus

As King of Israel, Herod:

- Failed to act in the best interests of his subject

- Just wanted to have his curiosity satisfied by meeting Jesus, having heard about his miracles

As Roman Governor, Pilate:

- Was appointed by Rome to ensure prisoners had a fair trial
- Knew Jesus was innocent, and even said so publicly but chose to pervert justice and wash his hands of Jesus

All three treated Jesus as if he was guilty of breaking Roman law, and more shockingly God's law, (even though Jesus himself is the lawgiver). Yet Jesus never protests his innocence. Had he done so, he could have walked away as a free man. The gospel accounts of his life show that he was always able to silence his opponents.

**Why didn't he do the same this time? We truly need to:**

### **3. Stand amazed at the servant's substitution (Isaiah 53:4)**

We might wonder what he has done wrong, to be stricken and smitten by God. After all, Isaiah has told us that the servant is innocent (v9) and God has called him the righteous one (v11).

**He is not dying for anything he has done wrong – instead he is dying for our sin. (v5)**

Jesus' death was both punitive and substitutionary.

- God is striking his Son – this is the language of punishment
- Jesus is being punished for our sin – this is substitutionary

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are affected by our sin. All three persons of the Trinity are committed to the destruction of sin, and the liberation of humanity from its curse. As God in human flesh, Jesus went willingly to the cross to suffer the punishment our sin deserves. **What was that sin?**

- **V6** speaks of a sheep that has chosen to leave the care of the shepherd and fend for itself.
- Paul says this in **Romans 1:19-21**: For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. <sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give

thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

We may think of sinners as being thieves, murderers or drug dealers, for example, and of course they are, but both Isaiah and Paul tell us that sinners are those who choose to enjoy all of God's blessings, as they live in the world he has created, but never give him so much as a single thought. The God of the Bible is:

- A personal God who minds very much when his name is used as a swear word
- A God who is holy and doesn't like human beings living against his created pattern
- A God who is Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit

The greatest sin is to be so estranged from this God that you totally ignore him and so opposed to him that you never seek him or come to know him.

**It is that sin which God has placed on the Lord Jesus Christ and for which he has been punished in our place so that we can be reconciled to God.**

**Here is the love of God displayed for us:**

- The love of the Father as he sends his own Son in order to secure our salvation
- The love of the Son as he willingly offers himself up to death on the cross, taking our sin on himself and being punished in our place
- The love of the Spirit as he opens our eyes to see the worth and glory of Christ, and come to trust him with the salvation of our souls

**Will you spend more time coming to know this God who has loved you?** Jesus is more excellent person than any other person alive. The more time you spend with him as you read the Bible and ask him to reveal himself to you, coming to him in prayer, the more you will come to love him.

**The more you love him, the more you will long to be with him, where he is.** If Jesus is a stranger to you, and you love your sin more than you love Jesus, then please hear the end of the quote we started with – **Death is the godly man's wish, the wicked man's fear.** If you are not trusting in Jesus alone to save you, you rightly fear death because you will have to suffer the punishment for your sin

yourself – eternal death under God’s eternal wrath. Here’s the good news. It doesn’t have to end like that.

**The message of the Bible is that Jesus was punished in your place, and if you repent and put your trust in him, he will forgive you, cleanse you and give you eternal life.**