

Keynotes from Pastor Tim's am Sermon on 23/08/2020

Mini Series - Trusting God in the darkness

“Joy that sustains”

Please note this week's reading comes from the New Living Translation

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 See, my servant will prosper; he will be highly exalted.¹⁴ But many were amazed when they saw him. His face was so disfigured he seemed hardly human, and from his appearance, one would scarcely know he was a man. ¹⁵ And he will startle many nations. Kings will stand speechless in his presence. For they will see what they had not been told; they will understand what they had not heard about.

53:1 Who has believed our message? To whom has the LORD revealed his powerful arm?² My servant grew up in the LORD's presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him.³ He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care.⁴ Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! ⁵ But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed.⁶ All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all.⁷ He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.⁸ Unjustly condemned, he was led away. No one cared that he died without descendants, that his life was cut short in midstream. But he was struck down for the rebellion of my people.⁹ He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave.¹⁰ But it was the LORD's good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants. He will enjoy a long life, and the LORD's good plan will prosper in his hands. ¹¹ When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins.¹² I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier, because he exposed

himself to death. He was counted among the rebels. He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.

Everyone of us needs a goal to focus on, if we are going to persevere in a difficult task. That was true for Jesus in his work of redeeming sinful humanity, and making peace with God for us. The fourth servant song in Isaiah speaks in vivid language about the sufferings he endured, but it also gives us a unique insight into the heart of Jesus and how he felt about what he suffered on our behalf, as he bore our sin. We know that Jesus:

- Is being punished with the eternal death we deserve because we, like sheep, have wandered away from God, choosing to live our lives without honouring him as God.
- Came to bear that sin himself in order to make us right with God so that we could enjoy a living relationship with God that honours him. The deepest longings of our heart will only be met as we come into fellowship with the living God. Nothing in this world can do this for us.
- Was rejected by the people he came to save, wrongly accused in the greatest miscarriage of justice the world has ever witnessed, and disfigured to the point of becoming unrecognisable as a human being.

What did that feel like to him? v11 says: **Out of the anguish of his soul – to bear our sin caused anguish in the heart of our saviour.** What motivated him to keep going, despite all that he would endure?

Hebrews 12:2 gives the answer: Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, **who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross,** despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus endured the cross by keeping his focus on the joy set before him. **Isaiah 53:10-11** shows us four joys that sustained Jesus, and those four joys are ours too because we are united to Jesus by the Spirit, through faith.

1. **The joy of doing the Father's will - (v10) Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief;**

We have seen that wicked men conspired against Jesus and condemned him to death. Does that mean that human plans had defeated God's plan? **V10** shows us that the suffering and death of Jesus was not a tragic accident at the hands of wicked men. In eternity, before God made anything, God (Father, Son and Spirit) agreed to magnify the grace of God by sending the Son of God to die for those whom the Father had chosen to save. When Jesus entered our world 2000 years ago, he knew that he was doing the will of God and coming to do all that the Father, Son and Spirit had agreed upon in eternity. **John 6:38** 'For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me'. In his darkest hour, in the garden of Gethsemane he was able to say: "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." (**Matthew 26:42**)

Such is the love between the members of the Trinity that Jesus delighted in doing the will of God, and that joy enabled him to endure the cross.

2. The joy of a prolonged life - (v10) he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand

The will of God prospered in the hands of Jesus but resulted in his death at the age of 33, yet the promise here is that his life will be prolonged and continue to be effective. That doesn't seem to make sense, but it is true because:

- a) Three days after Jesus died, he was raised to life in an everlasting body, never to die again.
 - In that body, he ascended to heaven, sitting down on the throne of God to reign.
 - In that body he will return to this earth to bring human history to an end, establishing a new heavens and a new earth where there will be no more, sin, death, sadness or suffering.
- b) His life continues to be effective. The will of the Lord is still prospering in his hand.
 - He is actively continuing his work as the risen ruling head of the church, and king of kings

- He is building his church despite the opposition of Satan, ruling over it with sovereign power and wisdom
- He is actively saving those God has given him and governs their lives.

Before he went to the cross, Jesus knew it would be the means by which his life would be prolonged and continue to be effective. The joy of that knowledge enabled him to endure the cross.

3. The joy of gathering a family - v10 when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring

Out of the anguish of his soul, (v11) he sees something that satisfies him– the Father’s will being done, his life being prolonged and a family being gathered.

- As God, the Father is crushing his son. He sees this as the means by which children will be born to him, born again by the Spirit of God
- As God, the Son is in anguish of soul. He sees this as the means by which children will be born to the father, born again by the Spirit of God.

The servant’s work is effective, building a new community which is:

- A family where God becomes our Father, Jesus our elder brother, and every believer our brother or sister
- A people made righteous (v11) because Jesus has taken our sin away, and lived a righteous life on our behalf
- A community who praise God now, and throughout eternity, for his grace

As Jesus is forsaken by the Father, disfigured by our sin, and tormented by our guilt, the joy of seeing this new community being gathered enables him to endure the cross.

4. The joy of assured victory (v12) This verse might be better translated as ‘ I (God) will allocate to him the many, and the strong he will allocate as spoil’.

The spoils of war that are described here can be identified as the **many** he died to save (we who are trusting in him for salvation) and the **strong** who opposed him (Isaiah 52:15 Kings shall shut their mouths because of him).

- a) The servant receives as his own all who he died to save:

- We become his inheritance, given to him by the Father – the inheritance of nations.

b) Those who opposed him become his spoil to do with as he wishes:

- Satan, and all who conspired against Jesus, lie crushed beneath his feet

Jesus was sustained by the joy of knowing that all his foes would one day fall silent before him and that he would have a people as his own treasured possession, freed from sin, Satan and death.

God gave Isaiah this prophecy 700 years before Jesus was born. Jesus grew up knowing this song and how it speaks of both the anguish and the joys he would have. In his darkest hour, he fixed his faith on the joys that would be his.

He never doubted in the darkness what God had told him in the light.

The four joys that sustained Jesus are ours too:

- 1. The joy of doing the Father's will** – The greatest way to have joy is to do the will of God as it is revealed in the word of God. **John 14:21** Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."
- 2. The joy of prolonged life** – suffering, sickness and death are part of living in a fallen world, but Jesus' promise is 'Because I live, you also will live' **John 14:19**. Even though we will die (unless Jesus comes back first) our bodies will be resurrected to enjoy life in the presence of Jesus. The resurrection changes everything for us so our work now has meaning and purpose. **1 Cor 15:38** Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.
- 3. The joy of being family** – we belong to God's family, together with people from every nation under heaven. This family will love us and encourage us, helping us to live godly lives until one day we are all made perfect, united round the throne of God the Father, and our elder brother Jesus Christ.
- 4. The joy of assured victory** – our enemies are the forces of Satan, who tempt us with sin, and threaten us with death (**Ephesians 6**). We sometimes wonder if we will ever

break free of sinful habits and temptations, but the joy set before us is that our enemies are also Jesus' enemies. They lie crushed beneath his feet and one day they will lie crushed beneath our feet forever. Sin, Satan and death will not have the final word over our lives, if we belong to Jesus.

In the end, the saints win because Jesus has won.

As the one who is the author and perfecter of our faith, Jesus leads us in victory. We will undoubtedly go through dark times, but we have the assurance of:

- The joy of doing the Father's will
- The joy of prolonged life
- The joy of being God's family
- The joy of assured victory

We need to keep our focus on those joys by
never doubting in the darkness what God had told us in the light.