

The Depth of God's Love

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[0 : 00] Welcome again, good morning, especially good morning and welcome to our missional justice partners and all our guests. My name is Oscar, if you don't know me, and I serve as one of the elders here at Watermark.

Please join me in prayer as we dive into God's Word. Father, we humbly come before you as we look at this incredible passage from Isaiah.

I pray, Lord, that our hearts and minds will be open to receive your Word today. Thank you for your Word, which is real and true and powerful, that penetrates deep into every facet of our body, our heart, and our mind.

I pray, Lord, that as we consider your Word today, that we would see the beauty of the suffering of Jesus and the beauty of his glorious resurrection. Be with us, Lord, in this time.

In your name we pray. Amen. I'm going to invite Jaya in a moment to read the Scripture, but before then, a question.

[1 : 04] The question is, how do you know that someone loves you? Once in a while, I'll ask one of my kids, I'll be a bit cheeky, and I'll ask one of them, how do you know that Daddy loves you?

And usually, their response is, because you make me cheeseburgers. Or, because you read me bedtime stories. How do you know that Jesus loves you?

I mean, we all know that he loves us. We read it in the Bible all the time. But how do you know that he loves you personally? How do you experience his love?

Are you secure in his love? Let's park that thought for a moment. Over the past two weeks, we've been going through an Easter sermon series, looking at Old Testament Scriptures and how they point to or foreshadow the cross of Jesus.

Two weeks ago, Kevin shared from Exodus 32 to 34, where, after being rescued by God from slavery in Egypt, the people of Israel sinned terribly against God by worshipping an idol made out of gold.

[2 : 15] And Kevin, he addressed this seeming paradox, which was, How can a holy God who absolutely cannot stand sin somehow forgive sinners? And we learn that God indeed pardoned Israel because of one man, Moses, who stood in the gap between God and man.

Because of the righteousness and the goodness of this man, Moses, God pardoned Israel. This is a picture of the gospel, is it not? But Jesus is our perfect mediator, who, on the cross, stood in the gap.

And all of us who love and trust him, God will pardon us and forgive us as well. Last week, Niels continued on our series, and he opened up Leviticus 16, where God gave Moses specific instructions on the Day of Atonement, where one day a year, the people of Israel, through the high priest, would conduct a complicated but necessary animal sacrifice to appease the wrath of God. But as Niels shared, we learned that this sacrifice of bulls and goats, although it would appease God's wrath for a year, it wasn't enough. For us here today, through that animal sacrifice thousands of years ago, we still could not see God or know God or be with him.

We need something more. And today, I'm excited, because we're looking at this incredible passage in Isaiah, which is the picture, which is a picture of the perfect and permanent Savior, Jesus Christ.

[3 : 52] God sent his Son into the world, our Lord Jesus, to be the true mediator and the true sacrifice. Now, by way of background, the prophet Isaiah's ministry was primarily to the people of the southern kingdom of Judah.

Recall that in about 900 BC, Israel was split between the northern kingdom called Israel and the southern kingdom called Judah. And Isaiah's ministry began about 200 years later.

And throughout his book, Isaiah warns Judah to repent from sin or otherwise face the wrath of God. Isaiah also gives Judah hope that God would deliver her from her enemies.

And he also provides his promise that God would bring a servant Savior who would rescue God's people. Chapter 7 of Isaiah, he would be born of a virgin and be called Emmanuel or God with us. Chapter 11, he would come from the root of Jesse. He would be a descendant of King David. And chapter 9, he would sit on David's throne, ruling with justice and righteousness.

[5 : 02] These are all pictures of Jesus. And today, today's passage paints this very, very detailed picture of this servant Savior who would be despised and rejected by man.

He would face unspeakable suffering. In fact, nowhere in the Old Testament is the suffering of Jesus depicted at such length and in such graphic detail as in this passage from Isaiah 52 and 53. It's incredibly sobering to read and we'll hear in just a moment. But what we'll also see today, I hope, is that the servant's suffering will lead to his glory. And the glory for all of us who love and trust him.

Can I invite Jaya to lead us in the passage today? Good morning, church.

Our scripture this morning comes from Isaiah 52 and 53. Feel free to follow along in your bulletin or on the screen behind me. Starting in Isaiah 52, 13, we read, Behold, my servant shall act wisely.

[6 : 09] He shall be high and lifted up and shall be exalted. As many were astonished at you, his appearance was so marred beyond human semblance and is formed beyond that of the children of mankind, 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? 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.

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.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions.

[7 : 25] He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. And with his wounds, we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray.

We have turned, everyone, to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted.

Yet he opened not his mouth. Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter. Like a sheep that before its shearers is silent. So he opened not his mouth. 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? And they made his grave with the wicked and with the rich man in his death.

Although he had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him. He has put him to grief.

[8 : 32] 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. Out of the anguish of his soul, he shall see and be satisfied.

By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servants, make many to be accounted righteous. And he shall bear their iniquities. 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.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks, Jaya. Oh, sorry. My lovely wife told me that my mic was too far from my mouth. So I moved it closer. Can you guys hear me okay now?

All right. Let's start. Let's start in Isaiah chapter 53, verse 2. A root out of dry ground.

[9 : 44] That phrase seems to refer to the relatively obscure place of the Lord Jesus' upbringing in the north, in Nazareth. Nazareth was about 100 kilometers from Jerusalem, the capital.

And it was a dry desert where nothing good was ever really expected to emerge. And Jesus himself, there was nothing noteworthy about his family background or his parents.

Mary and Joseph. He wasn't born to a rich or prominent family. His parents weren't part of the religious elite. He wasn't naturally handsome or attractive. When we think of the physical qualities of an attractive person, we think of a celebrity or an athlete, someone who was tall or strong, handsome or pretty.

He had none of these things. In fact, he had no beauty that we should desire him. And so although Jesus is called the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, Hebrews chapter 1, he had no beauty that we should desire him.

Jesus, God in flesh, God incarnate, God who waited thousands of years to be born into the world. And when he did, he was entirely unremarkable.

[11:01] If we saw him on the street, we wouldn't turn to look at him twice. In fact, we do the opposite. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and also one from whom men hide their faces.

He was despised and we esteemed him not. He was called a man of sorrows. What a sobering description of someone, is it not?

But such an accurate one. Everything about his life speaks to the burden that he carried. He was born in a small, insignificant town.

He grew up poor. His own people rejected him. His disciple, Peter, denied him. His other disciple, Judas Iscariot, betrayed him. The religious leaders persecuted him.

He had no place to settle or call home. Our Lord Jesus, this is him. His cousin John the Baptist was executed. His dear friend Lazarus passed away. The Bible never says that Jesus laughed, but we often read that he wept.

[12:07] But perhaps, more than any other reason, Jesus was called a man of sorrows because he always knew in his heart that he was born to suffer and die.

He was born to be both the mediator, standing in the gap on behalf of man to God, and the sacrifice, the true mediator and the true sacrifice.

Only one person who has ever lived has known the exact time and the circumstance of how he would die. What a burden to carry. And so, dear friends, what this means for us today is that although life is uncertain, and we're all going to face some sort of hardship, Jesus has experienced all of the messiness and all the ugliness that we'll ever experience.

Your best friend stabbed you in the back. Jesus has been there. Someone has broken your heart. Jesus has been there. Someone you love is sick.

Jesus has been there. He's been there, and he doesn't just understand or empathize, but he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

[13:20] He takes our sorrows upon himself. All the pain that we experience from broken relationships, all the suffering we experience from abuse, all the stress of having to perform, all of it, he takes it upon himself.

He made himself humble and lowly in order to carry this burden for us. He doesn't just cry with us. His tears mean that our sorrow can turn to joy.

Jesus said, come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Matthew chapter 11. Jesus, the man of sorrows. So we've just seen how Jesus suffered in life, but even more, he suffered in death.

Let's look at 52 verse 14. As many were astonished at you, his appearance was so marred beyond human semblance and his form beyond that of the children of mankind.

[14:32] Perhaps when we think about Jesus and his suffering, our mind goes right to the cross. The nails that pierced his wrists and his feet, the thorns that were gnawing at his head.

Jesus, hanging there naked, battered and bruised, alone and abandoned. A brutal and horrible depiction, the crucifixion of Christ.

But his suffering began well before the cross, as his passage in Isaiah shows us. Jesus suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane where he was in such anguish and in utter exhaustion.

Imagine the emotional stress and anxiety he was under in anticipation of the cross. I remember when I was a kid, I took piano exams and I remember sitting in the waiting room waiting for my exam.

I still had PTSD thinking about that waiting room. The waiting was worse than the actual exam. But imagine Jesus in the garden visualizing the road to the cross and the suffering that he would

endure.

[15:39] After he was arrested, he was brought in front of the Jewish authorities who mocked Jesus and beat him. They put a blindfold over Jesus' eyes and they would beat him and say, tell us, tell us, prophesy, tell us who is beating you.

And after the Jewish authorities passed Jesus over to the Roman authorities, the Romans also mocked him by putting a purple robe on Jesus and gave him a staff as a pretend king scepter. The Romans then grabbed that staff out of Jesus' hands and they beat him over the head with it. But perhaps the worst physical torture or physical suffering that he experienced before the cross was the scourging.

In verse 5 of 53, we read, upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds we are healed. Some Bible versions say by his stripes we are healed or by his scourging we are healed.

The New Testament describes the scourging of Jesus. And Bible commentators define scourging as a Roman judicial penalty consisting of a severe beating with a multi-lash whip containing embedded pieces of bone and metal.

[17:01] Picture right here. So perhaps this is why Isaiah writes, his appearance was so marred beyond human semblance and his form beyond that of the children of mankind.

Our Lord was beaten and flogged so badly that he was unrecognizable when the Romans were done with him. Those who witnessed this horrific punishment, they were astonished, they were appalled, they were horrified at the appearance of Jesus.

And this was all before Jesus carried the cross and then he went up to his own crucifixion. After the Romans had fastened that crown of thorns on his head, Jesus somehow stumbled up to Golgotha where he was nailed to and hung on a cross for perhaps three to six hours.

and in the last moments before his death, he prayed, Father, Father, why have you forsaken me? For on the cross, Father God did not just simply turn his back on Jesus and abandon him. Father God wasn't passive. It's not as if his hands were tied and he could not help but let the Roman authorities do unspeakable evils to his son.

[18:18] Isaiah tells us it was Father God's will and intent to crush his own son, Jesus. Jesus was smitten by God and afflicted as the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Father God intentionally put our sin on Jesus on the cross and watched both our sin and Jesus perish. But shouldn't that be us on the cross to experience and receive the wrath of God?

But instead, Jesus was made an enemy of his own Father for our sake. Do we understand this? In the Watermark Bible reading plan this year, we looked at the account in Genesis of God instructing Abraham to sacrifice his own son Isaac.

Abraham, he agreed to do what God instructed him to do. And so he tied a bunch of wood on Isaac's back and as they climb Mount Moriah, Isaac, understandably confused, he turns to his father and he says, Father, where is the lamb for the burnt offering?

Can you imagine being Abraham in that moment having to respond to your son? About to sacrifice your own son?

[19:42] The son he loves, his beloved son, the son he waited a hundred years to have, his promised son? Can you imagine? And so when we think about Abraham potentially sacrificing his own son, perhaps, perhaps we have a glimpse of the heart of God the Father when his own terrible wrath bore down on his own son, Jesus Christ, who is perfect, holy, and righteous.

As Jesus said, Father, Father, why have you forsaken me? So how do you know that God loves you? How do you know the breadth and the length and the depth of the love of God to you?

Look at Jesus. Look at the cross. But now the question is, why did Jesus have to suffer so terribly? I mean, we learned last week from Leviticus that the people of Israel needed to sacrifice an animal in order to atone for their sins.

And this, of course, foreshadowed Jesus being the true and permanent sacrifice as his soul makes an offering for guilt. But the animals that were sacrificed back in the day of Moses, they seemed to be treated quite mercifully.

The necessity of death was illustrated, but not the suffering. But here in this passage in Isaiah, Isaiah now adds this very graphic detail of the suffering of Jesus leading up to the crucifixion and also on the cross.

[21 : 10] Why? Why did Jesus have to suffer so terribly? Well, it's because in his suffering and in his death, God wanted to show us just how much he loves us, just how much he hates sin.

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.

In the Garden of Eden, we were supposed to be living in purity and righteousness with God as we were made in his image. But sin came into our hearts and our hearts are now prone to wander. Our heart compass is out of whack. I mean, my heart compass is out of whack. I realized something recently. I have a portfolio of investments, stocks and bonds.

And I realized recently that I've been checking the prices a bit too often. It's one of the first things I do when I wake up and one of the last things I do before I go to bed. And I think about the prices and my profits and my losses throughout the day.

[22 : 17] I do the mental math on it. And I'm not saying that having investments is a sin. Don't get me wrong. But what I am saying about myself and what I have been convicted about is that I am adoring my investments.

I'm adoring the profits a bit too much. I'm thinking about it too much. I'm putting too much heart share and mind share into it. My heart's prone to wander. I'm a sinner.

I had to repent. Perhaps something has caught your heart. Maybe it's money. Maybe it's a relationship. Maybe it's food or alcohol.

Maybe it's vanity. All we like sheep have gone astray. Everyone each to his own way. But because of the eternal holiness and perfection sin is appalling to God.

And the result is that every single sin must be accounted for and must be punished. So every lash on the body of Jesus as he was scourged every time he was beat he was beaten in his head such that no one could recognize him afterwards.

[23 : 24] All the blood that spilled from his body. Every amount of suffering that he experienced the nails that cut deep into his wrists and feet his blood that was poured out all of this every aspect of his punishment accounts for our sin and deals with our punishment.

And so how do you know the depth the length the breadth of the love of God for you? Look at the cross. Greater love is no one than this that someone laid down his life for his friends.

John 15 13 So now what does Isaiah say happens after Jesus' death? He writes in 53 verse 10 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.

Isaiah wrote that Jesus would die for the sin of man but be raised to life again he shall prolong his days and so where is Jesus now?

Let's go back to the very first verse of this passage from 52 13 Behold my servant shall act wisely he shall be high and lifted up and shall be exalted our Lord was raised to life and is now exalted into the highest place in heaven next to Father God for all time Now this phrase high and lifted up was used by Isaiah in chapter 6 when he was first commissioned as a prophet of God Isaiah sees this vision I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up and the train of his robe filled the temple above him stood the seraphim each had six wings with two he covered his face and with two he covered his feet and with two he flew and one called to another and said holy holy holy is the Lord of hosts the whole earth is full of his glory this is where Jesus is seated now 24-7 into eternity the angels who are in his presence cannot help but adore and praise and glorify the risen Jesus and if we here love and trust him one day we too will join the angels in his glorious assembly but now if Jesus had suffered and died on the cross and remained buried in the grave until today well he would be remembered as one of the greatest human beings that ever lived no question about that but if he remained buried in the grave until today well those of us that call us Christians we would be in a sorry state

[26 : 10] Paul writes in 1 Corinthians if Christ has not been raised your faith is futile and you are still in your sins we would have no hope there would be no glorious eternity in heaven there would be no power of God to transform us today but Jesus did indeed rise from the grave and the resurrection is proof that God is real and his hope is true it's it's the resurrection is proof that Jesus is who the prophet said he is the world's promised Messiah and Savior it confirms God's promise to us and Jesus is alive and so therefore now the question is what does the resurrection mean for us here today here at Watermark well let's look let's look at these last few verses from our passage today from 53 verses 11 and 12 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 counted righteous and he shall

bear their inequities therefore I will divide him a portion with the many and he shall divide the spoil with the strong

Christ's resurrection means for those of us here today who love and trust him our standing in front of the holy God is righteous is perfect and not only that but we also have the privilege of partaking in Christ's glory as being a part of his family and of course it's hard to grasp that day to day but we have to remember this week because this week we're going to go back to work or school or families or wherever and we're going to get bombarded by the religion of this world someone is going to annoy us and frustrate us as Irene pray we're going to be grumbling sometime this week we have to go back to what we learned today and so this week when all these things happen to us let us refocus our hearts and our minds on the risen Christ and remember the implications of his resurrection I'll mention just four implications number one our righteous standing is confirmed the death and the resurrection of Jesus means that our sin isn't just forgiven and accounted for it's been wiped it's been buried into the deepest ocean it has been put as far as the east is from the west it's been erased from all hard drives and backup servers we are justified in front of the holy God his resurrection means that instead of guilt and shame we are righteous and pure in the eyes of God number two we are part of God's family but we aren't merely forgiven and justified incredibly we are also part of God's family we are like the orphan who steals the king's crown jewels but instead of a prison sentence the king adopts us into his own family we live in his palace we dine at his table and our new title is now prince or princess and so when earthy relationships let us down we can be comforted and run into the arms of our loving father in heaven and three death has been defeated Jesus did come back from the dead an unbelievable event that has never happened in the history of the world Jesus went face to face head on with the thing that we cannot defeat death and he defeated death and what that means for us is that for all of us who love and trust Jesus he has defeated death for us as well and so all the ways that we face suffering and hardship we have hope that one day all pain and anxiety all the depravity of our own heart all the ugliness of the world politics and the horrors of war all of that will be gone and will be replaced with being face to face with Jesus in person for all time death has been defeated and fourth and final the power of God is at work within us the resurrection means that we are forgiven we are justified and part of God's eternal family but it also means that even today through prayer and the power of God's spirit we have access to the same power which raised Christ from the dead

Paul prays this in Ephesians that you may know what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe according to the works of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at the right hand in the heavenly places today the Holy Spirit is transforming us Christ followers are becoming a little less selfish a little more generous we are becoming a little less anxious a little more content dying to ourselves bit by bit a little more everyday becoming more like Christ through the power of God the same power which raised Christ from the dead and let me close now by looking at the book of Acts chapter 8 in this chapter Philip one of the early Christian leaders he meets this Ethiopian court official who is on his way back from Jerusalem and Philip overhears this court official reading from Isaiah and he asks him do you understand what you are reading to which the official responds and says how can I unless somebody guides me and what was the Ethiopian court official reading like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent so he opens not his mouth in his humiliation justice was denied him who can describe the generation for his life is taken away from the earth he was reading from Isaiah 53 the court official then asks Philip about whom I ask you does the prophet say this about him or about someone else and of course

Philip reveals to the court official that Isaiah is speaking about Jesus Christ the promised Messiah the savior of the world and shortly thereafter as the two men pass by a body of water the Ethiopian court official asks Philip to baptize him what's happening here the official he hears God's word from Isaiah as we have been today he receives it deep into his heart and he responds by moving towards Jesus and his gospel and so today as Isaiah reminds us here at Watermark that Jesus the man of sorrows Jesus is the suffering servant Jesus is the glorified king and as we see the depth and we realize the depth and the breadth and the length and the height of the love of God towards us let us also move towards him respond to him and move towards him our mission here at Watermark is to make mature disciples of Jesus Christ but that doesn't just mean knowing the text intellectually it doesn't just mean coming to church it doesn't just mean going to religious type events it means that in our hearts you come to know how much Christ loves you you become

secure in his love and your love with him becomes deep rooted and it's real it's intimate it's personal it's alive it's powerful and it's life changing and so how do you know
[34 : 28] God loves you how do you know Jesus loves you look to the cross look to the resurrection let's pray Father thank you for all of these Old Testament scriptures which paint such beautiful pictures of Jesus they were written and talked about thousands of years ago hundreds and thousands of years ago Lord and yet are true and real and encouraging to us today I pray Lord that as we have received your word today from Isaiah that we would not just leave here and think it's interesting and intellectual Lord but your word would be rooted deep in our hearts and that we would come away from here God being more secure than ever in your love for us and we would know the depth the breadth and the height and the length and the deep profoundness of your love for us thank you in Jesus name Amen mercy

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