Isaiah 53:10-12 *53: The Conquering Christ*

***“Tell Them That Again”***I heard a story this week about Charles Spurgeon. Now, I mention Spurgeon from time to time in my sermons, but I don’t know how well-known he is today. He was a preacher at London’s Metropolitan Tabernacle in the mid- to late 1800s. And, in his time, he was about as famous as a preacher can get. From the stories I hear, he had Billy Graham level name recognition. Here’s the story, as Spurgeon himself told it:

It is now long years ago. I was announced to preach in a certain country town in the Eastern Counties. It does not often happen to me to be behind time, for I feel that punctuality is one of those little virtues which may prevent great sins. But we have no control over railway delays, and breakdowns; and so it happened that I reached the appointed place considerably behind the time.

Like sensible people, they had begun their worship, and had proceeded as far as the sermon. As I neared the chapel, I perceived that someone was in the pulpit preaching, and who should the preacher be but my dear and venerable grandfather! He saw me as I came in at the front door and made my way up the aisle, and at once he said, ‘Here comes my grandson! He may preach the gospel better than I can, but he cannot preach a better gospel; can you, Charles?’

[By the way, I love that line. There are many preachers out there that can preach the gospel better than I can, but no one can preach a better gospel. Because the gospel of Jesus Christ is the best gospel there is.]

As I made my way through the throng, I answered, ‘You can preach better than I can. Pray go on.’ But he would not agree to that. I must take the sermon, and so I did, going on with the subject there and then, just where he left off. ‘There,’ said he, ‘I was preaching on ‘For by grace are ye saved…’ Now you take it up, and go on.’

I am so much at home with these glorious truths that I could not feel any difficulty in taking from my grandfather the thread of his discourse, and joining my thread to it, so as to continue without a break. Our agreement in the things of God made it easy for us to be joint-preachers of the same discourse…

And so, Spurgeon says, he took up where his grandfather left off and began expounding on the text when, after about 10 minutes, he felt a tug on his coat-tail. He turned around and his grandfather was standing there, and he wanted a turn again. So Spurgeon stepped aside while his grandfather added some observations and illustration to the point his grandson was making. And so the sermon went on, a team effort between grandfather and grandson.

And rather than be annoyed by this, his grandfather’s constant interruptions and yet steadfast refusal to simply finish the sermon himself, Spurgeon says he was delighted by it. Because, he said, whenever it was his turn in the pulpit, he could hear his grandfather behind him gently encouraging him:

For now and then he would say, in a gentle tone, ‘Good! Good!’ Once he said, ‘Tell them that again, Charles.’ and, of course, I did tell them that again. It was a happy exercise to me to take my share in bearing witness to truths of such vital importance, which are so deeply impressed upon my heart. (<https://tonyreinke.com/2007/03/23/cj-mahaney/>)

Easter Sunday is one of those days that can be challenging for a preacher. It comes around every year, and it is always the same story. Easter Sunday is a day when preachers are asked to give the core message of Christianity in its most basic form. It can feel, if I am being honest with you, a little repetitive.

But today, I want to imagine that Charles Spurgeon’s grandfather is sitting behind me, tugging on my shirt-tail, and whispering “Tell them that again.” “Tell them that again.” Today’s message might be familiar, but I cannot tell it often enough.

And, honestly, I don’t believe you can hear it enough either.

***The Fifth Gospel***For the last 6 weeks we have been looking at Isaiah 53. This chapter in the Old Testament, which was written centuries before Jesus lived and died, has been called “the Bible in miniature” and “the fifth gospel.” Even though Isaiah did not know Jesus—or even know that the Messiah would be named Jesus—he wrote about and explained Jesus’ death with uncanny accuracy.

And so, for the last 6 weeks we have been looking at this epic chapter to see how it explains the events of Holy Week. We’ve seen that we, like sheep, have all gone astray (v. 6); but Jesus was the shepherd who substituted Himself for the sheep. We saw that He took on our punishment and was pierced for our iniquities (v. 4); but His wounds meant our healing. We saw that it was our rejection and low esteem that brought Him to the cross (v. 3); and yet we saw that it was the Lord’s will to crush Him; and that He went to His death willingly, as a testament to His love for us (v. 10).

The entire Bible is tinged with blood. Blood is the symbol of life--the shedding of blood the symbol for the cost of sin—and so there is a lot of blood in the Bible. But even in a blood-tinged Bible, Isaiah 53 stands out as a particularly bloody chapter. It is focused on the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus to a high degree. It is a chapter all about Good Friday.

And if that’s all that Isaiah 53 was, it would still be an amazing chapter of scripture. Again, it was written centuries before Good Friday, and yet it explains it so well. If all Isaiah 53 did was explain the sacrifice of Jesus, it would be one of the most treasured passages in our Bible.

But, as Christians, we believe that Jesus’ story did not end with His death. Good Friday was followed by Easter Sunday. The tomb of Jesus was borrowed for just 3 days. And, here’s the amazing thing about Isaiah 53: Isaiah predicted that too! He didn’t just anticipate Christ’s death, he also anticipated His resurrection!

The final 3 verses of the chapter. **Isaiah 53:10-12:**

**0**Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer,
    and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin,
he will see his offspring and prolong his days,
    and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.
**11**After he has suffered,
    he will see the light of life and be satisfied;
by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,
    and he will bear their iniquities.
**12**Therefore I will give him a portion among the great,
    and he will divide the spoils with the strong,
because he poured out his life unto death,
    and was numbered with the transgressors.
For he bore the sin of many,
    and made intercession for the transgressors.

I don’t know if I can express how mind-blowing this is. As a piece of literature, all by itself, this makes no sense. Remember, the bulk of this chapter is about the death of the servant. Verse 4 says that He was “smitten” by God. Verse 5 says that He was “crushed for our iniquities.” Verse 8 says that he “was cut off from the land of the living.” Verse 9 says that He “was assigned a grave with the wicked.” If there is one thing made clear in this poem, it’s that the servant will die. That’s clear.

And yet, all of a sudden, midway through verse 10, we start getting these hints that even though He dies, yet He will live. By my count, there are at least 7 different phrases that point to the Servant’s ongoing life:

Verse 10: “**he will see his offspring”**
and: **“prolong his days,”**and: **“the Lord will prosper in his hand.”**Verse 11: **“he will see the light of life**”
and: **“[he will be] satisfied;”**
Verse 12: **“I will give him a portion among the great”**
and: **“he will divide the spoils with the strong,”**

This is mind-blowing! He’s going to die, yet He will live. How is that even possible? Who in history could this possibly be talking about? Until we get to that weekend in Jerusalem, about 700 years later, and suddenly it all makes sense. Not only did Isaiah anticipate Jesus’ death, He also foresaw His resurrection.

I’m not going to take the time to look at all 7 of these phrases, but instead I’m going to pick out three that help to capture the meaning of Jesus’ resurrection. 3 truths foreseen by Isaiah that remind us why this day is so important. 3 truths that I am pleased to tell to you again.

***The Vindication of Jesus***First, Isaiah predicts that **The Servant’s Life will Be Prolonged.** The life terminated at the cross was not concluded. This is why more people attend Christian churches on Easter Sunday than on any other day of the year: because He is Risen! He is Risen indeed! **Verse 10:**

**10**Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer,
    and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin,
he will see his offspring and prolong his days,
    and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.

For me, that phrase at the end of the third line is the clearest statement of resurrection in the passage. “He will prolong his days.”

Remember, in verse 8 we were told that he would be cut off from the land of the living. Now we are being told that His days will be prolonged. In verse 8 the question is: Who can speak of his descendants? Now we are being told that he will see his offspring.

Isaiah could not have possibly known the specifics, but we do. On the third day after Jesus’ death, His friends went to His tomb to honor Him and anoint His body. But instead of a heavy stone sealing the entrance and Roman guards; they found an empty tomb and angelic messengers. The message the angels gave was “He is not here, He is risen.”

And shortly thereafter, they started to see Jesus for themselves. He spoke to Mary outside of the tomb. He walked with Cleopas and his friend on the road to Emmaus. He stopped by the upper room to visit with Peter and the others, and then came back again to resolve Thomas’s doubt.

There were so many appearances, to so many different witnesses, that no other explanation makes sense. It’s not a hoax, it’s not wishful thinking, it’s not a mass hallucination. Jesus who died was raised back to life on the third day.

And here’s the thing that really sets Jesus apart: once Jesus was raised to life, He never died again. That’s what really makes Jesus remarkable: His resurrection is permanent.

People coming back to life is obviously rare, but there are stories in the Bible. That song at the beginning of the service talked about the man who was thrown on the bones of Elisha, which is really a wild story (2 Kings 13:21). Elijah brought a widow’s son back to life (1 Kings 17:21-22). Jesus himself was involved in the resurrections of Jairus’s daughter, a young boy in the town of Nain, and the raising of Lazarus. Even today we sometimes hear stories about people who have been clinically dead for 10 or 20 minutes or even longer. But, amazing as those resurrections are, all those people eventually die again. Death is still a universal outcome.

But not Jesus. His days were prolonged. Listen to **Revelation 1:18:**

**18**I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

Jesus went down to death, and He came back holding the keys. He is the Living One. The Ever-Living One!

And, more than that, His resurrection is His vindication. Let’s go back to **verse 10** and notice the way it starts: “Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer.” We talked about this striking line last week. It is a breath-taking truth that God killed His own Son.

But you might think that means the Father was upset with the Son in some way. You might think they had some sort of falling out. Some older translations of this verse even say that the Lord was “pleased” to crush His Son. Maybe the Son was some sort of usurper, and the Father had to put Him down.

The second half of the verse makes it clear that’s not what happened. Not what happened at all. It was the will of the Lord to crush him, but it was also the will of the Lord to prosper Him. The resurrection is confirmation that Jesus was completely in step with His Father. The resurrection is the vindication of Christ. **John Stott writes:**

He who was publicly condemned for us in His death; was publicly vindicated in His resurrection. The resurrection was Gods’ decisive demonstration that He had not died in vain.

The resurrection is God’s very public confirmation of Jesus. It’s a way of saying: “This is my Son. With Him, I am very well-pleased.” It’s a decisive declaration. A public attestation that the Father is satisfied with what the Son has accomplished. The resurrection is the public honoring of the Son as the One who has been given the name above all names.

I heard a quote this week: “The shameful death is followed by victorious splendor.” Yes, indeed. He will prolong His days. He holds the keys. He is the Ever-Living One.

***Dividing the Plunder***Which leads to the second truth about the resurrection. Isaiah foresees that **The Servant’s Spoils will be Shared.** The resurrection does not just mean blessing for Jesus; it also means blessing for those who belong to Him. Skip down for the moment to **verse 12:**

**12**Therefore I will give him a portion among the great,
    and he will divide the spoils with the strong,
because he poured out his life unto death,
    and was numbered with the transgressors.
For he bore the sin of many,
    and made intercession for the transgressors.

The key lines right now are the first two. I love this image. It ties in so well to the image of Jesus going down to Hades to take the keys of life and death. It’s an image of Christ as victorious warrior, our champion; who took on death and then defeated it on our behalf.

Think of it this way: most of us are familiar with the story of David and Goliath. Here is this epic one-on-one confrontation. But why were they fighting? Why just the two of them on the battlefield? It’s because each one represented his own army. Goliath was the champion of the Philistines. David the champion of the Israelites. And so, the understanding is, whichever one of them wins the one-on-one battle; that’s the army that wins the war.

When David wins, the whole army wins with him. I don’t know if the Philistines were really expected to meekly lay down their weapons when Goliath hit the dirt; but at any rate they lost their confidence and the Israelites found theirs and suddenly the rout was on. And **1 Samuel 17:53** adds this detail:

**53**When the Israelites returned from chasing the Philistines, they plundered their camp.

David won the battle, but the Israelites shared the spoils of victory.

It’s the same with Jesus and us. When he wins, we win.

That’s what **verse 12** is getting at. Jesus plunders the camp of death, and then He divides the spoils.

Think of some of the things that belong to us because Jesus is resurrected. For one thing, there is **the forgiveness of sins**. This is what the final part of verse 12 is talking about when it says that “he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors”. This is the heart of what Isaiah 53 is getting at when it talks about Jesus carrying our sorrows and being crushed for our iniquities. He stands in our place, and bears the punishment for us. We stand in His place, and receive His righteousness before God.

That’s what happened at the cross. But how do we know its true? How do we know that we are truly forgiven? Because He has been raised. The resurrection is the confirmation. It’s the proof positive that our sins are fully paid for.

Or, again, we are **adopted.** This is what verse 10 is talking about when it says that the servant will see his offspring. Not that Jesus will have literal, genetic descendants. But in the victory won at the cross and the empty tomb Jesus now has billions of spiritual descendants; sons and daughters of the Father and co-heirs with Him of the kingdom. Straying sheep are now children of God. We are adopted into the family of grace.

Or, consider **our own future** **resurrections.** 1 Corinthians 15:21-23 says this:

21For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

It’s so important to remember that Christ’s resurrection is the preview of our own victory over death. When we say “I believe in the resurrection of the dead” in the Apostles’ Creed, that’s what we mean. We are not saying we believe in Jesus’ resurrection, though we do. We are saying that we believe in our own resurrection. One of the spoils of war that Jesus won for us is the promise that our own graves will not be our final resting place; that we too, will someday live forever.

Jesus is truly our champion. The conquering Christ. And He has won for us an eternal future as the forgiven, adopted children of God.

***He Sat Down***Then, third. Isaiah foresees that **The Servant will be Satisfied.** Jesus is happy with what His work has accomplished. Jesus is happy in you. Now we will look at **verse 11:**

**11**After he has suffered,
    he will see the light of life and be satisfied;
by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,
    and he will bear their iniquities.

He will see the light of life and be satisfied. Jesus looks at what He has done—His suffering and His resurrection—and He’s satisfied.

Here’s the image that comes to mind: imagine someone who has just put in a hard day’s work. Maybe a farmer who has just finished planting a field; or a carpenter who has finished a house. And now that farmer sits in his pick-up, maybe he cracks open a cold drink, and he looks out over the field with its straight rows, and he is satisfied. Or the carpenter stands on the sidewalk, and he looks at this house he has built, and he feels good. He’s satisfied. The work is done.

**Hebrews 12:2** says this:

**2**fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus did the work of the cross. He endured its shame. Then He was raised back to life. And after that He ascended to heaven and He took His rightful seat at the Father’s side. And, I imagine, as He sits and looks back at everything He’s done: He’s satisfied. He’s happy. That’s the joy set before Him. That’s the joy that makes it all worthwhile. He takes pleasure in a job well done.

Which means that right now, the Son of God is looking out upon this planet, and He sees His Church—He sees those straying sheep who have now become children, He sees those sinners whose debts have been paid, He sees those who once despised and rejected Him now lifting Him up and exalting Him—He looks out on this planet and He sees this forgiven multitude coming from every tribe and tongue and people and nation—and He is happy. He is satisfied.

More than that, this means that He sees our church. He sees us, right now, gathered in this building and watching online, He sees us honoring Him and joined together into a local, spiritual family, and He is pleased. He is pleased with us.

And, more than that--more than the global church or the local congregation—this means that Jesus looks and He sees you. He sees you! and He sees me! And we are His joy! He sees you, and His heart is glad.

And the day is coming when we will see Him face to face and when we do He will look at us and He will be thrilled! He will say: “Look at you! Look at you! You were deserving of wrath, but I took your place. And it was worth it! I am so happy! You are my joy! I am satisfied.”

***Knowledge of Him***That’s what **verse 11** is getting at, when it says that the servant will be satisfied. It is such a glorious picture of what Christ has done.

But there is one more thing I want to point out in verse 11. It’s the line that says **“by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many.”** It’s a tricky line, and one the translators have struggled with. There’s a footnote in most of our Bibles that give us an alternate reading.

As it is, it appears to be talking about the servant’s knowledge. To me, it almost sounds like the servant is a nerd who cracked the code on justification. The way it is written, it makes it sound like justification is some sort of puzzle; but the servant figured out how to make it happen—like a computer hacker. And, to an extent, that is true. Though I don’t think it was that much of a puzzle for God.

But the footnote reading tells us that this line could also read **“By knowledge of Him my** righteous servant will justify many.” Either works with the original language, but I think this rendering makes it a little clearer. The key is not the knowledge the servant puzzled out; but rather the knowledge we have of Him.

In other words, the way to be counted among the many who are justified, is to have knowledge of what the servant has done. As the Bible says elsewhere, the key is to put our faith in Him. Which means more than just knowing about Jesus—having head knowledge. This is calling for heart knowledge. Putting your hope and trust in Him. Accepting what He has done in taking your place on the cross and defeating death at the empty tomb so that we can take a share of the spoils.

One of the great things about Easter Sunday is that so many people are participating in church who might not otherwise. We’ll probably have more people viewing online, and we have more people in attendance, than we usually do. I think that’s great. If you’re just dropping in because Easter is one of those times you try to get to church; or you are here to make a family member happy; or maybe somebody invited you—I’m so glad you came.

I’m sure many of you have heard the story of Jesus and the resurrection many times. I’m so glad that I am privileged to tell it to you again.

But the opportunity you have today is to make it your story. To move beyond head knowledge to heart knowledge. To accept what Jesus has done for you and be counted among the justified.

Then He will be satisfied with you.