

The Suffering Messiah Isaiah 53:1-

Allow me to begin with lyrics of a hymn written by William Copper. He is the same person who wrote, "There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins ..."

1 Hark, my soul, it is the Lord! 'Tis thy Saviour, hear His word;

Jesus speaks, and speaks to thee, "Say, poor sinner, lovest thou Me?"

2 "I delivered thee when bound, And, when bleeding, healed thy wound;

Sought thee wandering, set thee right, Turned thy darkness into light.

3 "Can a woman's tender care Cease toward the child she bare?"

Yes, she may forgetful be, Yet will I remember thee.

4 "Mine is an unchanging love, Higher than the heights above,

Deeper than the depths beneath, Free and faithful, strong as death."

5 Lord, it is my chief complaint That my love is weak and faint;

Yet I love Thee, and adore: O for grace to love Thee more!

- ✚ In many parts of the world, aid is taken for granted because the beneficiaries are never told how this money is given. In some rural homes in Uganda, women have been given mosquito nets and what they do with them is to keep them under their mattresses - they refer to them as Mrs. Museveni's nets! Imagine!
- ✚ For many of us Christians, whose only idea of the cross is the summarized statement, "Jesus died for our sins", we may never appreciate the price he paid. No wonder our love for Him is so faint.
- ✚ Tonight, as we dwell on the theme of the suffering Messiah, I pray that the Lord will show us the depth of his love.

1.0 The unbelievable report about the suffering Messiah (vs 1-3)

1 Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? **2** 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. **3** 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. Isaiah 43:1-3

The prophet is saying, it is hard for you to believe us when we tell you, "here is the Messiah":

- When we look at this portrait of the Messiah, we do not see the demonstration of the Power of the Lord ('the arm of the Lord')
- You see a man who is weak and tender, unable to put up any resistance - one who the religious leaders easily throw out of His own Temple.
- The context of his upbringing was riddled with social-political and religious strife - He grew up in Palestine - a land dominated by Romans
- He was not impressive - *He had no beauty or majesty that we should desire Him.* There was nothing in Him to attract us to Him. He so self-emptied Himself that there seemed to be nothing of the glory of God left in Him.
- He was despised and rejected by men - that seems to be a fitting response. People are saying this cannot be the Messiah

Let us look at some Gospel accounts:

3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. 4 And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honour, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household." 5 And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6 And he marvelled because of their unbelief. Mark 6:3-6

1 After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews¹ were seeking to kill him. 2 Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand. 3 So his brothers² said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. 4 For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." 5 For not even his brothers believed in him. John 7:1-5

The main point to consider here is this portrait of the Anointed One did not meet the expectations of the people!

One writer puts it this way:

By the first century, the Jewish longing for the Messiah reflected the biblical tradition of a Davidic descendent, who would reign over Israel forever (2 Sam. 7:13; 22:51; Ps. 89:4). The Jewish community expected the Messiah to defeat the Romans and re-establish David's throne. Longing for the arrival of the Messiah, the anointed king of Israel, prompted crowds to gather along the road leading up to Jerusalem to announce Jesus' entrance to the city (Matt. 21:1-11). These crowds likely expected Jesus to enter the city, defeat the Romans and re-establish peace over Israel.

2.0 The Lord's servant suffers to bear the sins of the people (Vs 4-6)

4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 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. 6 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. Isaiah 53:4-6

- He took our pain upon himself. He made our griefs and sorrows His own. His compassion moved Him to do something about our predicament:

35 And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Matthew 9:35-36

- We thought he was smitten by God - that is, we thought he was judged by God. We did not know what was going on.

Here there is an echo of retribution theology - bad things happen to bad people

- Yet what happened to Him happened for us. What He did on the cross is what brought us peace
- His stripes have brought us both spiritual and physical healing
- We were lost, we could not find our way back to God, but the Lord sent us help in His son

Even before the Cross, Jesus as the suffering Messiah had a way of taking on the blame of others:

- When he ate with tax collectors it was him who was accused
- When he visited Zacchaeus, they said he has gone to eat with sinners

- When he was anointed by a woman in Simon the leper's house, it is his credibility which was questioned.
- He healed the sick and he was blamed for breaking the Sabbath law

3.0 The Messiah suffered and died (vs 7-9)

7 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. 8 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? 9 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.

Here we are invited to reflect on the final moments of our Messiah

- i. Jesus was denied justice - there was no truth in any accusation levelled at him. His appearance before Caiaphas, Herod and Pilate was a mockery of justice.

Fr. Lesslie Cleavenir has argued that there are twelve reasons why Jesus' trial was illegal. I will share six

“First, Jesus was arrested illegally. He was arrested secretly, by night, on no formal charge of any crime, by those who were to be His judges.

Second, Jesus was illegally subjected to a secret preliminary capital examination 'by night, contrary to the law.

Third, the indictment against Jesus was illegal because the judges themselves brought up an unprovable charge against Jesus without any prior testimony by witnesses.

Fourth, the trial of Jesus began illegally before sunrise in order that no one could testify on Jesus' behalf.

Fifth, In the case of Jesus, the Sanhedrin was illegally convened to try a capital offense on a day before an annual Sabbath.

Sixth, The trial of Jesus was illegal because it was concluded in one day”¹

¹ <http://www.lesiecleavenir.fr/pdf/Twelve%20Reasons%20Why%20Jesus%20Trial%20Was%20Illegal.pdf>

- ii. Jesus did not defend himself - Pilate kept pressing but he would not answer back to his accusers. Onlookers judged him guilty because he said nothing.

Have you ever been falsely accused?

Do you know the pain of being wrongly labelled?

At Fuller one Prof accused me of plagiarism! My assignment script was not returned. My future hang in a balance for about four weeks. That was my worst term in my studies. I lost all peace. I struggled with bitterness and hate. The worst grade on my transcript was in her class!

- iii. Jesus was beaten, ridiculed, spat upon and made to carry his own cross.

Nicky Gamble, in Questions of life, writes this about the way Jesus died, quoting from other historians:

He endured crucifixion for us. Cicero described crucifixion as ` the most cruel and hideous of tortures. Jesus was stripped and tied to a whipping-post, he was flogged with four or five thongs of leather interwoven with sharp, jagged bone and lead!

Eusebius, the third-century historian, described Roman flogging in these terms: ` The sufferer's veins were laid bare, and the very muscles, sinews and bowels of the victim were opened to exposure. He was

then taken to the Praetorium, where a crown of thorns was thrust on his head. He was forced to carry a heavy crossbar on his bleeding shoulders until he collapsed.

'When they reached the site of crucifixion he was again stripped naked. He was laid on the cross and six-inch nails were driven into his forearms just above the wrists. His knees were then twisted sideways so that the ankles could be nailed between the tibia and the Achilles tendon. He was lifted up on the cross, which was then dropped into a socket in the ground. There he was left to hang in intense heat and unbearable thirst, exposed to the ridicule of the crowd. He hung there, in unthinkable pain, for six hours while his life slowly drained away. It was the height of pain and depth of shame.'

- iv. He died as a criminal, he exchanged places with Barabbas
- v. He felt forsaken by His Father. That eternal bond of the triune God seemed to break because of our sins

4.0 The Messiah was victorious in spite of His suffering

10 *Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes⁸ an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall*

prosper in his hand. 11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see⁹ and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

His suffering was not defeat but victory.

- i. He brought pleasure to God - His suffering was God's doing not the triumph of Religious leaders and Roman authorities.
- ii. He was our sacrifice of atonement - He was our sin offering. He paid our ransom with His blood, with His life.
- iii. His death was not the end of story - 'He will see his seed' because He was to rise from the dead
- iv. He will be satisfied with the outcome of his travail. By His suffering, he will justify many.

The Rewards of the suffering Messiah

11 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. **12**

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.

- a. He has made justification possible for many. His blood washes as white as snow. He gives every sinner who comes to Him in repentance and faith to start again.
- b. He has been exalted - He has been given a Name above all names (Phil. 2)
- c. He has been glorified and lives to make intercession for us forever

23 The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, 24 but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever.

25 Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. Hebrews 7:23-25.

5.0 Implications of a suffering Messiah

1. His suffering should enlarge our view/concept of God. God is not a creator who is impersonal and detached from human experience. In Christ, God suffered. God has the capacity to empathize and sympathize with us.

The Lord is mighty, high and exalted but also a God who suffers.

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:15-16

2. The price for our redemption was high. Jesus Christ paid the price and this must not be taken for granted.
 - The rebellious cannot say that God has not done enough to get me saved. *One atheist was asked, what shall you say when you appear before God and he says to you why did you not believe in my son? He replied, I will tell god, you never gave me enough evidence!*

- Believers must be careful not to cheapen what the Messiah has accomplished in reckless living.

26 For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. 28 Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. 29 How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? Hebrews 10:26-29

3. Human suffering is not foreign to God. In our suffering, we can come to God knowing that He too has suffered and can minister to us at our deepest point of need. God can minister into all the pains of our human experience: grief, shame, betrayal,
 - a. God is not the originator of suffering
 - b. God will bring all suffering to an end one day.