

## The Suffering Servant Rejected

Isaiah 53.3

### *Sermon*

In his new book Jon Ronson argues “a great renaissance is sweeping our land” & that great renaissance is cultivation of a culture of shame. His book is called *So You've Been Publicly Shamed* & § in it contends that the vehicle triggering rise of shame is social media: “justice has been democratized, silent majority are getting a voice. But what are we doing w our voice? We are mercilessly finding other peo’s faults. We are defining boundaries of normality by ruining lives of those around us. We are using shame as a form of social control.” Commenting on this phenomenon for *Slate*, Eric Posner, prof at U of Chicago Law, ids what is new: our ability “to broadcast an opinion—or, more accurately, a gut reaction—to the whole world, instantly, wo pausing to give it any thought. This, combined w pervasive anonymity & trad animosity to anyone who acts or thinks unconventionally, has awoken atavistic instincts that are multiplied a hundredfold through herd mentality. And then these ill-considered reactions are stored indefinitely, while being imm accessible to anyone, thanks to the efficiency of search engines.”

No matter what era/culture you’re talking about, always three **elements** in shaming someone. § 1st **judgment**. Not in sense of condemnation/punishment, but in sense of analysis/estimation. See something, id something in someone that doesn’t look right, conform to expectations, violates societal norms/moral/cultural. IOW public shaming doesn’t start as a public act, but begins as a private consideration, private estimation, private judgment. But doesn’t stay private. 2nd **exposure**. Thought process runs something like this: “if what I’m seeing really does violate societal norms, if my conc about this pers/activity is right, then peo need to know.” A turn on the oft-repeated phrase: if you see

something, say something. But here, not just reporting a suspicious package, but pointing out offending pers. This is where private judgment becomes public, in fact the essence of public shaming. But there's a point to public shaming, a purpose. & that's 3rd element: **ostracism**. One pers points out violation of a 2nd pers, exposes flaws/shortcomings to other peo, for purpose of singling out that pers & telling everyone else to avoid them. Posner (law prof) summarizes: shaming "occurs when a pers violates norms of the comm, & other peo respond by publicly criticizing, avoiding, or ostracizing him." Inherent irony to public shaming: we expose someone publicly for very purpose of avoiding them; point them out in order to turn away from them.

Prob quite obvious why I'm going to such lengths to describe process of public shaming: at heart of text today. Isa 53 (p. 511). Communion Suns enjoying a series w/in series, looking at 4th Serv Song. Song describes Serv of Y w special focus on his suffering. Last month looked at vv 1–2 & marveled at how this unique **Serv** would be unrecognized: § v 1 predicts no one would bel that he was the Serv & § v 2 said reason is that his appearance was unexceptional. No *beauty/majesty*. Not dominating presence expected for a conquerer, much less for M.

But now v 3 goes one step farther: not just that he went unrecognized, but now positively **put to shame**. § *despised* carries notion of "a hasty dismissal" (Oswalt, p. 383). Same word in 1Sam 10.27 when Samuel anointed Saul as 1st king of Isr, but some men in his home town *despised* him when they said, *How can this fellow save us?* & in 1Sam 17.42–43 when Goliath towered over a little shepherd boy & *despised* him by saying, *Am I a dog that you come at me w sticks?* Dismissive. As it relates to Serv, peo look him over & say Nah, not interested, not the One. Ergo *rejected by mankind*. § Surprised to see that *rejected* not a verb in Heb but an adj: "lacking, running out of." No one to go w him.

At this pt of msg I need to restate what I've argued in 1st two sermons on Isa 53: **id of Serv**. Trad Jewish interp of this psg §: nat of Isr. Pointed out in previous vss areas where that interp falls short. But I think it could fairly be argued that v 3 refers to nat of Isr. History of Jewish peo certainly sounds a lot like v 3 reads. So in this case I wouldn't say trad Jewish interp falls short so much as I would say that it doesn't go far enough. To whatever extent v 3 may describe Jewish peo generally, § it must be that much more true for Isr's M, for the One G promised would reverse curse—not only for Isr but for all humanity. IOW v 3 may refer to nat of Isr, but it must refer to t&g Isr, the One toward whom Isr's history is directed & the One through whom all nats are blessed. & that M is J of Nazareth. That of course is how Xians have understood Isa 53 ever since J rose from the dead. & it doesn't take much reflection to understand why. § These words—*despised & rejected by mankind*—could be the one-sentence summary of his whole earthly life. Went around Isr doing good, healing sick, preaching good news, but peo dismissed him: “how can this fellow save us?” & while in early days of his min he attracted great crowds, as time passed, crowds dwindled to a dozen, & eventually even they fled. He ran out of men.

What's fascinating about this psg is **implied reason** for Serv's rejection. When someone put to shame, begins w judgment/assessment/analysis/estimation. What was it about Serv that made peo dismiss him? § A: *a man of suffering & familiar w pain*. Perh you know this vs in KJV: “a man of sorrows & acquainted w grief.” But not just gen pain/grief in view. § 2nd word translated *pain* in NIV/“grief” in KJV lit. “sickness.” Same word as 1Ki 17.17 in story where Elijah lived through a famine w widow of Zarephath & her son, but her son *became ill, grew worse & worse & finally stopped breathing* & 2Ki 13.14 to describe Elijah's successor Elisha who *had been suffering from the illness from which he died*. Serv was “a man characterized by pain & familiar w sickness.”

Brings up an imp q: why would phys illness in the Serv cause peo to dismiss him? how could sickness ever be a justifiable reason for everyone to reject him? Answer as simple as it is pathetic: we don't expect that out of conquerors/powerful leaders/saviors. Not only do we expect a dominating phys presence (a la v 2), we also expect great phys strength, energetic & powerful, not a sickly weakling, but a powerful warrior. That's what we think M should be. But that's not at all what he was. When M came, was fully human §: he got hungry (Mt 4.2), thirsty (Jn 19.28), & tired (Jn 4.6). J not an angel wandering around w a halo. J every bit as human as you & I are. His body was real, his humanity was real, & so his pain was real. When he stubbed his toe, it hurt. When he caught a cold, he felt miserable. When he touched something hot, it burned. Must never minimize humanity of X in an attempt to emph his deity. Yes M is fully G, but if he weren't fully human he wouldn't be M.

Nowhere was the M's phys pain on greater display, nowhere was the X's ostracism more evident, nowhere was the Serv's rejection more complete than at cross. Relig leaders entirely dismissive: *if he is SofG* (Mt 27.40). His own peo so thoroughly deserted him that no one stood up for him at his trials, & even those friends who were pres at the cross *stood at a distance* (Lk 23.49). In end everyone there *beat their breasts & went away* (Lk 23.48). § On cross J became *one from whom peo hide their faces*. Ill of teens shielding faces, "I don't know him!" What J endured. Judged, exposed, ostracized. See, friends, you can never say that G doesn't understand what you're going through, can never say that pain/suffering/even phys sickness you endure is beyond G's ability to sympathize w. Reason J became fully human was so that he could fully enter into everything you exp. § Heb: *Since children*—that's you & me—*have flesh & blood, J too shared in their humanity* (2.14), § *he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful & faithful HP in service to G* (2.17). J endured false judgment so that he could sympathize w you when you are wrongly

judged. J faced total exposure so that he could be merciful to you when you are exposed. J ostracized so that he could be your faithful high priest when you are shunned. IOW reason we dismissed J—his limitations, weakness, pain, humanity—is very thing nec for him to enter into our world & be merciful G we need him to be. & not only that, he had to endure pain/suffering/sickness/death so that we might be forgiven: § *that he might make atonement for sins of the peo* (2.17). Why did J endure cross & despise its shame? To atone for sin. We who have been guilty of innumerable offenses. We who should be publicly exposed for our shameful deeds. We who would have been ostracized not just from human community for our years on earth, but from very presence of G for all eternity. G the only One who can form a complete & accurate judgment of us, only One who can fully expose who we really are. But instead of shaming us for our sin, out of love he sent his S to the cross to be shamed for us. J was crushed that we might be healed, J went naked that we might be clothed, J was ostracized that we might be accepted.

This is the gos & it's what this table is all about. We came in today w our our shortcomings, brokenness, sin. Even this past wk we have done shameful things, things that would make others in this room turn away & shield their face. But this table says, Come, you who are ashamed. Come, you who have sinned. Come, you who are far away. Come. I've been quoting Heb 2 for a reason: one more allusion v 3 & Heb 2.10–11: § § *J not ashamed to call them bros & sis*. Jesus doesn't hide his face from you. He offers himself to you at this table.