

How do we view the born Saviour?

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Preparatory

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Congregations, one of the gods of the Romans was Sol Invictus. Sol Invictus. Sol means the sun and Invictus means you can't conquer him. Sol Invictus, the Unconquerable Sun." He was married to Luna, the moon, and they celebrated that idol of the sun. They saw the sun in the sky but they also wanted to serve that sun in temples, and they had many temples in Rome for Sol Invictus. And Sol Invictus was celebrated especially on that day that the sun began to shine longer during the day. So he was celebrated on December 25th. On December 25th you have that change in nature, right, that the days are becoming longer and that the sun instead of slowly disappearing is coming back.

So on that day of December 25th, Sol Invictus was worshipped and how did they worship him? Well, it was kind of the time of new life, right? New life, a light. So we have lights and candles and also with greenery, with fir and ivy and holy and other greenery, and they made, of course, circles with that. The sun is a circle too, right, round, so they made wreaths, wreaths of all those green things to Sol, right, to Sol Invictus. And those wreaths were kind of talismans, were mascots, so that you hang one of them on the front door, that's protecting you, then Sol, the sun, is protecting you and no evil will come through the door. Of course, they also used branches, green branches, and eventually they began also to add apples, red apples, in their adorations, and they mixed that with some other religions, also with the tree of life. If you eat of the tree of life, you will have eternal life.

The Christian church has hijacked that feast, has incorporated the feast in their religion. When Christianity began to be more important, they used all those elements of worship and said, "You know, we can change that a little bit. We can baptize all those customs." And that's why in the Christian church they incorporated all those pagan things and there were so many of them, so many of them, even almond rings, right? Almond rings. They even point to the sun god. And on the old almond rings there are also leaves imprinted, right, because it was a wreath and it's everywhere. And it's also in the name Christmas. Christ Mass. The Mass in the Roman Catholic Church, it was Christ's Mass. The Dutch people say Christmas and my mother always said, my father said, "Don't say Christmas, say Kerstfeest, Christ's feast. Not the Mass, you're not Roman Catholics."

So many of those things, trees and wreaths and rings and fruits and greenery and even poinsettias are mentioned in old stories, which is also connected to this, it's everywhere.

When you start peeling an onion, you just keep going until you have nothing left, and so with all those traditions, Christmas traditions, there are so many of them that it's everywhere and you start peeling and you have nothing left. So why do I say this? Why do I bring this up? Well, don't forget that some ministers in the past and some of our forefathers even refused to preach on Christmas day. They said, "No, December 25th itself is worldly, pagan." And they refused to do that. So why do I say that? Maybe we should tone things down a little bit, right, and just consider for ourselves what are we doing, and even if those things are not pagan and it would be all right and no worries, right, even then how time-consuming and what our children say if you ask little toddlers, "What is Christmas about? What is Christmas, Johnny?" What do they say? Do they come out with all the things they see in the house or do they say, "Mommy, Christmas is the day the Lord Jesus was born." That is the most special thing. Do they notice that? Do they see that? Do they feel that?

So what a contrast between the worldly celebration and the Christian celebration, and may our Christian celebration be pure and genuine, and may we see the contrast today. Today, I would like to focus on the first two verses of Isaiah 53 and see the difference. Isaiah 53:1-2,

1 Who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? 2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

So far.

How do we view the born Savior? Four thoughts. In the first place, totally beloved. Where is that in the text? "He shall grow up before him." He shall grow up before him. Who is "him"? Who is "him"? Are those the unconverted Jews? He shall grow up before them? No, it says he shall grow up before him. Do you know who "him" is? It's God. It's God himself. It's his Father. He shall grow up before his Father as a tender plant, and his Father will see him, and he'll keep his eyes on him as that tender plant and as that root out of the dry ground always before him. Secondly, sadly despised, "he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." In the third place, yet revealed. So before the Father and despised but yet revealed. Verse 1, "Who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?" Revealed. And in the fourth place, therefore highly esteemed. So then we turn the second verse around, no form or comeliness, no, there will be a form, there will be comeliness, there will be beauty, there will be desire. It's a sermon for preparatory, right? So in the four points: we shall see him, by nature no form, no comeliness, but then form and comeliness and beauty that we should desire him. So how we view the born Savior: in the first place, totally beloved, the Father views him; secondly, sadly despised by all people by nature, we despise him, we have no desire in his beauty; in the third place, yet revealed, the arm of the Lord reveals he will change things around; and in the fourth place, therefore highly esteemed, turning around the last verse, the last sentences of this piece.

Congregation, our text is one of the four songs of the servant of the Lord. There are four of them in the book of Isaiah and this is also one of them. The fourth one begins actually in chapter 52, verse 13. Do you see it a few verses before our chapter begins? I think the chapter should begin actually there and not in 53:1 but that was not inspired, originally there were no chapters and no verses, so someone around the year 1000 started to put verses and numbers and divided chapters. So I think they did it wrong here, so it should have started with 52:13, "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high."

The servant of the Lord, who is that? That servant of the Lord is our beloved Lord Jesus. He came to this sin-cursed world as the servant to serve instead of people because people departed from God and they didn't want to serve him anymore. And then the Lord Jesus came to serve, the servant of the Lord, but he began to serve in such a different way, in such a godly way, in such an effective way. Then in chapter 53, verse 1, you see the raw lamentation, that awful complaint, "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?" We will deal with that verse in thought three, right?

But then, "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant." Let's talk about that sentence now, "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground." So there is a tree, the tree of the royalty of David, and the tree was cut down. It was not a big, huge, royal tree anymore but there is a twig coming out of the side. There is a tender plant coming out. There is a shoot coming out of the ground and it was kind of unexpected, right, because it was such an infertile dry ground you did not expect that tree to survive at all. It was so ungodly, so without God, missing the favor of God, and unexpectedly he came.

And "he shall grow up before him as a tender plant." So God the Father looked at that tender plant, right? The angels sang about it, the shepherds came to see him, the wise men later, and so many saw him but the Father in heaven was beholding him. "He shall grow up before him," and that's so important because he wanted to show his innocence and his work and who he was to his Father.

So when did that start? When did the Lord Jesus reveal himself to the Father and said, "Look upon me"? And when was that true that he saw him, he so grew up before him as a tender plant, when was that? In fact, from eternity because I read in Proverbs, "Then I was by him as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." So in eternity. We can't understand that, can we? Before the world began, children, the Lord Jesus was already there in his divine nature and he played before the face of his Father, he rejoiced in him, brought up with him, "I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." So the Lord Jesus was so close to his Father and his Father kept an eye on him, and they never separated. They were so close and loving one another.

So God the Father kept an eye on him in eternity, and then he was conceived in the womb. Who saw that first? God the Father, right? God the Father saw it, how the child was worked in the lowest parts of the earth and was that holy child in her. God the Father

saw it. It was before him and God the Father rejoiced in seeing that expectant mother and that child in her. Before him, it was his Son. And when he was born in Bethlehem in that manger, keep in mind before him, God the Father looked at that child in the manger and he rejoiced so intensely in that child. You know, others were rejoicing but especially the Father was, rejoiced in him, delighted in him, and when the Lord Jesus grew up, those first years he was so obedient to his parents, right? He was never disrespectful, never disobedient, he was never a problem. God the Father saw that before him. And the Lord Jesus at 12 years old went to the temple and was talking about theological issues and he talked with the Pharisees and his father and mother couldn't find him, and he said, "Did you not know that I had to be in the things of my Father, in the business of my Father?" And his Father saw him. He was always before him. And when the Lord Jesus came out and also spoke to the people and wanted to be baptized, and John the Baptist refused at first. He should not baptize him, he should be baptized by him. "No," the Lord Jesus said, "I need to fulfill all righteousness and I need to be baptized." And he was baptized and he came out of the water and we hear a voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased. Hear him." Oh, the Father rejoiced in everything. He saw his innocence. He saw his willingness. He saw his sacrifice. He saw him the way he was. And also on the day of the transfiguration, again, the Father saw his innocence and he saw the tender root, he saw the human nature, he saw his poverty, he saw his glory, everything he was.

And he grew up before Jehovah as a tender plant. You know, we also live before him, right? The Lord Jesus lived before his Father. We also live before him, always before him. You can't escape. He's always looking. He's always looking at the Lord Jesus. He was and is but he's always also looking at us. So have you heard of the expression Coram Deo, that the Son is like that? That means before the face of God and actually that's what it says, "and shall grow up before him," before him. The word "face" is in there in the Hebrew. Before his face. So is the Lord rejoicing when he looks at us, when we do things before him, because all we do, we do before him?

So in everything he did, in everything he said, God the Father looked at him but let's go to the second thought: sadly despised, "he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." That is so painful that the Almighty God sent his only begotten Son into this world and he was perfect and innocent and worthy, and people look and despise him and look the other way and say, "You know, let us have fun. Let us make a big celebration of Christmas. Let's have a huge party. Let us have lots of good food. Let us make the best of it that the kids like it. Let us have a real Christmas thing, right, big Christmas thing." And where is the child? Where is the child? Despise him. No time for him. No love for him. No form, you know, no image, nothing in him that attracts people. Nothing attractive in that child for the human sinful nature.

Despising him. Now let me quote a few texts in the Bible about despising and just compare it. Remember Esau and Jacob and remember that lentil soup, sauce, that Esau terribly wanted? "Then Jacob gave Esau bread and the pottage of lentils and he did eat and drink and rose up and went his way, thus in this way Esau despised his birthright." "I

don't care. I don't care about my birthright." We will look at that in the future. "You know, I can't be bothered by that." That is despising. "I don't care." The Lord Jesus being preached so many years, "I don't care."

Think of Saul. You know, some people were, some evil men were against the election of Saul as king but the children said, "How shall this man save us, and they despised him and brought him no presents, and he held his peace." Saul was wise. He did not say anything, right? But they despised him. They despised Saul. He was chosen by God and despised by those people.

And Michal, David's wife, Saul's daughter, looked through a window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, before the ark, and she despised him in her heart. You know, just compare that with the Lord Jesus being on earth and doing his work and despising him in our heart. Maybe you don't say much but we despise sin in the heart and you can do that also without any decoration, so you have no decorations at all, I mean no Christian decorations at all in your house, not even one candle, but if the child isn't there, you despise him.

Despising him. Are we despising his beautiful innocence? Are we despising his human nature? Are we despising the words of truth he spoke? What about his kindness? Well, you cannot deny that the Lord Jesus was very kind on earth. In his words and in his approach to people like the woman caught in adultery and you name it, he was so forgiving and kind and compassionate and there was so much empathy. "I don't care. Good for others, not for me." And we despise him.

And "he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty," nothing, no beauty, nothing at all." Isn't that terrible, that the Lord gave his only begotten Son, that light in the world, and the world despises him and received him not? There is no room for him in the inn, no room for him in the heart, no room for him in us. You know, he wept over Jerusalem, didn't he? He cried. His face was wet. The Lord Jesus was so compassionate with Jerusalem that despised him. And do we despise him with the tears he shed? We say, "No. He cried but I don't care about that. I couldn't care less." No beauty whatsoever. No beauty then. Is that you? At least, that was you, right? God's people except maybe certain of your age, but otherwise you have those years that you despised him, that Christmas did not mean anything to you. It was just hollow.

So despising him, despising his suffering, despising his death, no beauty in the cross, no beauty in the resurrection, no beauty in the ascension, no beauty in pouring out his spirit, and no beauty in the future either. No beauty in him at all. Isn't that offensive? You know, they said, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" And the Lord Jesus would show pomp and worldly pomp and majesty and glory, and if they would see a cedar tree or an oak tree instead of a twig, but they saw a twig, they saw a tender plant, and they didn't care for that.

"He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." That is the blackest confession you can find in the Bible. The

blackest confession. "When we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." His blood worth nothing to me. His life and obedience vile and meaningless for me. And that's especially sad in the church, right, because the Lord Jesus has been preached many years. I have preached him almost 25 years now and before that you have also other ministers and there were many reading services, and you have also read good material, and you have been exposed. He has spoken. He has explained himself. He has been preached and now after so many years, where are you at? Still despising him? That's unreal. Oh, we see beauty in other things. We see so much beauty in sports and Hollywood stars and say, "Oh, oh, he can perform and he can sing and he can do and he can..." And there are people you adore maybe, but no adoration of him. No beauty. Nothing.

Or we like work, we like to work hard, we like to make money and we are greedy. We like cozy evenings. We like company. What do you like the best in this month? What are you looking forward to? Looking forward to what? Look forward to attending the Lord's supper table to celebrate the death of the Lord Jesus because of his beauty, is that what it is? You know, I'm afraid even God's people need to be ashamed and too often they don't see the beauty, don't see it anymore. It has to be revealed to them again and that's why the Lord has given to us the Lord's Supper Table, to show them again, to say, "Here I am. Here I am. Enjoy me. See my beauty. Drink my blood. Eat my flesh."

You know, you may think that those people of Israel despised the Lord Jesus because they didn't know him, because they did not know any better. So if they would have known better, they would have celebrated him, right? Is that what you think? If they would have known him better, they would celebrate him? It's the opposite. When they did not know so much about him, they wanted to make him king, and the more they got to know him, the more they despised him. The Pharisees, they caught on earlier because they knew more what this Savior was claiming and the more they knew, the more hostile they became. It's also for us, it's not only our understanding, it's not that we don't get it and therefore despise him, even if we would know more of him, we would even despise him more. Isn't that awful?

And yet the Lord reveals himself, the third thought, "Who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?" It speaks about the arm of the Lord and that is quite important, the arm of the Lord. It is that mighty arm. We also read about it in chapter 52, verse 10, "The LORD has made bare His holy arm." Now that sounds kind of awkward, isn't it? "The LORD has made bare his holy arm." When people fight, play fight or serious fight, they take their coats off, don't they, and they make their arms bare, and that's in holy reverence the example in the Bible. The Lord has made bare his holy arm. He's showing his arm. He's showing his strength. He can do things you can't imagine.

So who has believed our report is the same question as and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed, because if here he reveals his arm, then you begin to believe him. You don't believe him if he does not show his bare arm and show you his power. We need that bare arm of God to show us because we fell so deep, we are resisting so much, and we

care so little that he has no beauty whatsoever unless the arm of the Lord is revealed. He begins the work of salvation. You know, in that hour the Lord Jesus rejoiced, I read in Luke 10, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: for so it seemed good in thy sight." So it seems good in God's sight to reveal the truth to the babes because, "no man can come to me except the Father which has sent me draw him and I will raise him up at the last day." It's the work of a Triune God.

So Christmas is futile and helpless and meaningless and there's no beauty in Jesus whatsoever until the arm of the Lord begins to be revealed and he draws out of darkness and shows you who you are, that you have despised him, that you have resisted in unbelief, that you have preferred the whole world over him, that you have been busy with all different things but that Christ was the last thing you'll be concerned about. You said no beauty and such shame you feel now, and such a conviction, you've been such a fool. How did you become such a fool? Have you seen it, what you have done all those years? No use for Jesus. Always in church, loving the truth, no use for Jesus.

You know, that's me, that's you, that's us by nature, but then the Lord is coming and he opens the eyes of the blind ones and they see something of themselves and they begin to despise themselves, and they begin to see something else. Oh, that God is so strong, he can break our will, he can open our understanding, he can reveal things regarding our own vileness. He opens the gospel. Oh, that is the revelation of the mighty arm of God.

And we see more often in the Bible things about that. For example, in Exodus 6:6, "I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm." Oh, the people of Israel rescued with the stretched out right arm of God.

You see it quite often in the Bible but let me just show you one example in the Bible of someone who was extremely evil, extremely evil, I'll prove that from the Bible, and was converted by the arm of God. His name is Manasseh, King Manasseh, and I read about this king and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed. So he seduced his own people to do more evil than the pagans. And, "Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols." You know, Manasseh, he did such wicked things, he was more wicked than the Amorites. Moreover, Manasseh shed innocent blood very much. He sacrificed babies until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to the other with sin. I'm just quoting the Bible, he filled Jerusalem from one end to the other with sin and shed much innocent blood. "And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken. Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God."

What an evil man, unreal what he did. You would say beyond hope. Many abortions. And the Lord, his mighty arm rescued him. He can do that. He is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you see? So that gives hope that the Almighty God, his arm, and that he is at work and pray to him and seek to repent and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So who has believed our report is the question, so there are many more questions about it, right? "O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me." Who has believed our report? Of course, I'm not asking to raise your hands, right? I'm not asking that but, so to speak, could you give answers to this question yourself? Who? Who has believed the report of the gospel and to whom of you is the arm of the Lord revealed, and you saw it? If you say, "Yes, I cannot deny that," then you may come to the Lord's Supper Table. But if you have not believed the report and are still despising him, there's no beauty at all in him, please stay in your pew.

That brings us to the fourth thought: therefore highly esteemed because of that strong arm, the bare arm, revealing it unto people. Therefore, for that reason, highly esteemed. So we see at the end of verse 2, "and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." When the Lord comes, we begin to desire him, we begin to see beauty. So that is a consequence of the work of the Holy Spirit. He doesn't only show who we are, he also reveals who Christ is. And congregation, believing is not the same thing as making a mental decision and saying, "No, I have to believe, so just [groan], just try it, just try to believe that I'm saved. I'm supposed to, right, so..." Forcing yourself, coercing yourself to believe. That's not believing. Believing is, in the first place, desire him, hunger for him, need him, long for him, that holy thirst for him. So think of someone who is thirsting for Jesus. Why would he? Why would anyone thirst for Jesus? If you really do, then you see beauty in him, right? When you see beauty in him, you desire him, you desire him, you see beauty in him.

So when you shall see him there will be beauty and you will desire him. If someone really desires Christ and highly esteems him, that person believes in him, that person believes and you cannot desire Christ without believing in him. I won't know how to do that. How can you desire him and not believe him? So are you one of those desirous people, "Give me Jesus or I die"? Have you seen the beauty of his name, Jesus? He will save his people from their sins. Did your heart go out to him and say, "Lord Jesus, I can't miss thee. I need thee." And did you go with that woman with the issue of blood touching the hem of that garment in the outgoing deed of faith?

You know, the Song of Solomon book is difficult but let me quote a few texts that are so much the heart of the gospel and the heart of the desire. From chapter 2, verse 3, 6 and 11, "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." Great delight and his fruit sweet to my taste. "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone." You see? He's altogether lovely.

If you see no beauty at all in Christ, then you have not enough knowledge of your misery. You need so much knowledge of your misery that you'll go out unto him and then he becomes precious. "But with the precious blood of Christ as the Lamb without blemish and without spot, To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." Believing is that Christ is precious to you. "And he came poor that ye through his poverty might be rich. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

So Christ is before him, before his Father, and Christ was despised by people, and Christ is, in fact, himself the arm of God revealing him, and then people begin to highly esteem him and to believe in him. Contemplate those things this week, question yourself, who you are. Ask yourself the question, "Has that arm of God been revealed to me? Has he made a change?" Ask other questions. For how many years did you not care about Jesus? No beauty whatever, nothing? The Lord changed that. And do you desire him and why do you? You know, you may want to write it down on a piece of paper and write down where the Lord found you, write down what changed you, write down what was the first time that you saw beauty in the Lord Jesus, write down what you have seen and what you hope to see.

So the Lord showing himself in the Bible yet, "Who has believed our report?" You know, before him, before him, before his face, right. Don't forget that someday you will see him, see him, when we shall see him in the gospel. There is no beauty by nature to desire him but someday you will really see him, also when you're unconverted, and his face shall consume you if nothing has changed. "And he had in his right hand seven stars and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword and his countenance was as the sun shineth in its strength." What will that be to meet with the God you have despised? What do you expect when that happens? The Lord Jesus said, "Did you believe the report?" And you said there was no beauty that we should desire him. How must the Lord deal with that? They said, "Mountains and rocks, fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb." The wrath of the Lamb. The Lamb has been preached many times and the wrath of the Lamb. He won't be so kind anymore. He won't be so forgiving any longer. He won't empathize anymore. It will be over.

So think about that and pray for that and don't only have a preparatory week for the Lord's Supper but also a preparatory week for Christmas, to live towards that way. Who has believed our report? So you have to answer the question yourself yes or no, and the main thing is if you desire Jesus as your Savior and highly esteem him. That is not the first mark of grace but it's the most important mark of grace. Highly esteeming the Savior. Amen.