

The Suffering Servant Stricken

Isaiah 53.4

Sermon

For over a year now making our way through a study of Isa's prophecy. Often called 5th Gos bc of how it reveals coming M. Nowhere more evident than in 53rd ch. Why we've taken LT Suns this school year to consider this 4th Serv Song in greater detail. Actually begins in 52.13, unfortunate. **Calvin:** not a "division" but a "dismemberment" (111). § Today begin 3rd stanza (p. 511), want to read Song up to today's text.

§ 52.13–15 challenged our idolatry of success: we bel success comes on other side of long slow climb, but Serv's success comes on heels of greater disfigurement & suffering than anyone else has ever known. § 53.1–2 challenged our idol of appearance: we spend amazing amts of \$ in order to have right appearance, whether shape/cond of phys body, name of label on clothing, what we show ourselves doing on social media. But when Serv came, unexceptional childhood (*root in dry ground*), unexceptional appearance (*beauty*). & § 53.3 challenged our idol of power: we expect leaders to have dominating phys presence, great strength, energetic, charismatic; don't want a sickly weakling but a powerful warrior. But Serv again reverses expectations: came not as a man of power but as a man of suffering, peo analyzed him, dismissed him, then exposed him & ostracized him. Publicly shamed. Now this Serv Isa asserts is the M—the One G anointed to rescue his peo. Yet G also predicted that his M would be disfigured not adored, unexceptional not remarkably beautiful, shamed not celebrated. § No wonder Isa says in 53.1: *who has bel'd?*

Brings us to 3rd stanza (vv. 4–6). Heart of psg, so we'll look at these 3 vss one at a time, today v. 4. One thing that stands out about this stanza is sharp contrast bet the *he* & the *we*: pres in every single line. § Why it begins w *surely*. **Motyer:** "conj emph the unexpected. Whatever peo

may have thought about the sorrows & sufferings they saw, the truth was dramatically diff” (430). Motyer’s pt: what peo thought about Serv was wrong. Precisely what v. 4 says: § *considered* = thought, “did esteem” (KJV). Isa saying our thinking was wrong, specifically that aspect of our thought we call **interpretation**. § PDT, *Instruments*: “Peo are meaning-makers; we have been created w the marvelous ability to think. We are always organizing, interpreting, & explaining what is going on inside us & around us. We all think though some of us do it better than others. We do not live life based on the bare facts of our existence; we live our lives acc to our *interp* of those facts” (41).

Nothing inherently wrong w this, nothing inherently wrong w living life acc to our *interp* of world around us. G **created** us to be interpreters. Consider beg of human existence: when G made A&E, spoke to them: *be fruitful & increase in #, fill earth*, same as to animals. But added: *subdue it, rule over it*. What is G doing? § PDT: “G had to explain who they were & what they were to do w their lives. They did not need this help bc they were sinners. They needed help bc they were human” (40). See, G created us w capacity not merely to see what happens & respond to it, like a gazelle sensing a threat & running, but created us w capacity to see what’s going on, interpret it, communicate about it, & act. & it’s on the basis of our *interp* & communication about facts that we operate.

But often, more often than we care to admit, *interps* tragically **flawed**. Misread sits, don’t have all facts, presume we know more than we do. Silly ill this wk: saw neighbor at bus stop, she & son decided to walk while L & I waited. Boarded, one stop later, caught up to them, they boarded. My thought: “they should’ve just waited, wouldn’t have expended all that energy.” As she passed me on bus, said: “oh, decided to catch this bus too?” Curious, I thought, since she saw me waiting for bus. Then realized what she meant: two diff buses we could’ve caught & we caught same one. I was ready to say, “Her *interp* is flawed.” But you know whose *interp* was flawed? Mine, & maybe hers too.

What makes our flawed interps sinful: inflated estimation of our interps. “I’m right & could not poss be wrong. No other way to see this issue.” Worship at **altar of our own sagacity**. Reason you avoid FB at times: all of your friends are always right about everything they say. & of course so are we. & not cured bc one is Xian. Very good friend of mine as a teenager diagnosed w cancer. Some ladies at ch speculated about what sin she must have been guilty of that brought this judgment from G.

& that is precisely flawed interp in our txt: *considered Serv punished by G*. § v. 3 presented Serv’s *suffering & pain*, § v. 4 conc that suffering was direct result of divine judgment for Serv’s sin. Note repetition of those words: *a man of suffering* (3) > *bore our suffering* (4), *familiar w pain* (3) > *took up our pain* (4). Might remember from last month’s msg: not any kind of gen pain & suffering. § *pain* = lit. “**sickness**,” e.g., widow’s son *became ill, grew worse, & finally died* (1Ki 17.17), Elisha *suffering from illness from which he died* (2Ki 13.14). In v. 3 we saw bare facts: Serv “a man characterized by pain & familiar w sickness.” & in v. 4 we drew conc: his sickness & pain result of divine judgment.

But Isa saying we were wrong, our interp flawed. Yes, we saw right: truly *a man of suffering & familiar w pain*, but sickness & suffering not due to his own sin. Not his sickness & suffering, § but **ours**. § *took up*: “lift up off someone.” *bore*: “shoulder” (both qtd from [Motyer](#), 430). Serv lifted burden of our sickness & pain from off our backs & shouldered it himself. See image prophet is drawing? Envisions us as crushed under weight of pain/sickness/suffering, like boulder crushing us, & Serv comes to us, lifts burden off us, shoulders it himself on our behalf. Image of **substitution**.

Which of course brings us to most imp q we could ask at this pt: § who is **the he**? This txt of course part of Heb B, so natural for us to consider trad Jewish interp of psg: nat of Isr. No doubt Jews faced unusual pain & suffering in their five-plus millennia as a peo. But sharp contrast bet

the *he* & the *we* make that an implausible interp. If the *he* is nat of Isr, then who are the *we*? Makes much better sense of sharp contrast bet the *he* & the *we* to id one from nat of Isr as Serv, acting on behalf of nat as a whole. & that's what a # of Jews in 1st cent did when they encountered J of Naz. v. 4 qtd by Jewish writer Mt (8.17). After recounting healing of man w leprosy, centurion's serv, Peter's m in law, § Mt records J healed many others & then tells us: *this was to fulfill what was spoken through prophet Isa: He took up our infirmities & bore our diseases.* See, phys illness is precisely in view: the man characterized by pain & familiar w sickness lifted weight of sickness off us & shouldered pain himself in his healing min.

But if J is the *he*, then brings up other q we must address: § who is the *we*? An inherent ambiguity that has puzzled interpreters for gens. At one level clearly § Isa saw himself as part of that mix: not “they” but *we*. & quite poss speaking § on behalf of entire nat. But Mt's qtn of this vs goes beyond that: remember, connected this vs to healing of centurion's serv—Roman, not Jew. So in one sense § the *we* is everyone, all peo. But there is a distinguishing char, something that marks the *we* off from rest of humanity: **realization**. § The *we* recog their orig interp of Serv was wrong: correctly saw he was man char by pain & fam w sickness, incorrectly concluded that his suffering was bc of divine judgment for his sin, & now realize what is true: Serv *took up our pain & bore our suffering*. Why Mt can quote this vs not only wrt Jews in 1st cent but also wrt a Roman centurion & his serv: all who recog who the Serv is included in the *we*. & Isa has more than merely phys in view. **Blomberg**: “[Pain] naturally suggest phys illnesses or injuries, but ‘[suffering]’ could include emo discouragement or mental pain as well. [v. 5] will refer to ‘transgressions’ & ‘iniquities.’ § Thus ... the Serv will bring healing for all of [the various things that make us unwell]; the ‘peace that he brings is holistic, restoring body & soul alike” (31). § Ergo other place v. 4 qtd: 1Pt 2.24. *he himself bore our sins in his body on the*

cross. See what Peter is saying: when we concluded that J was under divine judgment for his sin, we were wrong bc J had no sin. But we spoke better than we knew, for J was under divine judgment for sin. § We were right to conclude that Serv was *punished by G, stricken by him, & afflicted*, but that is so not bc of his sin, but ours. Hope of gos: J saw us in our need, crushed under weight of our sin/pain/suffering/even our sickness, & put himself in our place—lived life we’ve failed to live, died death we should have died, rose again to give us new life.

What we celebrate at this table. Grain used to make this bread died (so to speak) in order that it might nourish us. Grapes used to make this wine had to be pulled from vine in order that it might give us life. Table depicts substitution: J for us, our pain & sorrow on him so that we might be whole.

Post-communion

§ Takeaways from this word:

§ 1. **Overthrow idol of our own sagacity.** Recog we don’t have all facts, our interps not always right, as humans we need words from outside in order to correct our interps. Don’t assume you’re always right. Assume you’re in the wrong (e.g., log & speck in brother’s eye).

§ 2. **Consider others better than yourself.** Couldn’t help but cp this psg to Phil 2.3–5. Those who rightly esteemed X to be stricken by G are now called to esteem others to be more valuable than themselves. Goes hand in hand w 1st takeaway: if your own wisdom is standard by which everyone else judged, you’re in violation of this command. & as you grow in esteeming others, you’ll see your own foolishness more clearly.

§ 3. **Work for shalom (holistic well-being).** **Blomberg:** “Healing for all of [the various things that make us unwell]; the ‘peace that he brings is holistic, restoring body & soul alike” (31). As instruments in his hands, let us follow his example in word & in deed for *shalom* of the broken.