

19th February 2023

Isaiah 53:1-12

Who has believed our message

and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

² He grew up before him like a tender shoot,
and like a root out of dry ground.

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

³ He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.

Like one from whom people hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

⁴ Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

⁷ He was oppressed and afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away.
Yet who of his generation protested?

For he was cut off from the land of the living;
for the transgression of my people he was punished.

⁹ He was assigned a grave with the wicked,
and with the rich in his death,

though he had done no violence,
nor was any deceit in his mouth.

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.

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.

Matthew 16:21-28

Jesus Predicts His Death

²¹ From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

²² Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

²³ Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

²⁸ “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

Confessing Christ (Isaiah 53:1-12 & Matthew 16:13-20)

19-Feb-2023

G’Day Church Family

Please have your Bibles in front of you – opened at Isaiah 53:1-12 and then Matthew 16:21-28.

There’s the usual **outline** for you to **take notes** – if that helps you **concentrate**.

Let me ask **God** for His **help** and **guidance** first – let’s **pray**...

Intro - The Promised Messiah/Christ

Last week we saw how Jesus asked His disciples in verse 15 “*But what about you, who do you say I am?*”

And Peter made the amazing statement in v16

“*You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God”*

[Slide 1-Messiah]

And we said that **Messiah** was a **Hebrew Word** meaning “**God’s Anointed One**” – and we said the **equivalent Greek Word** for Messiah is **Christ**
Messiah and **Christ** **BOTH mean the same thing** – **God’s Anointed One**

But before we continue the story

It’s worth asking the question – what did Peter and the other disciples **expect the Messiah to do?**

According to the Old Testament - God’s promised Messiah – *would bring justice to the nations* (Isaiah 42:1) -and *proclaim freedom for the captives, to release prisoners from darkness, and bring a day of vengeance, ... and turn their sorrow to joy* (Isaiah 61:1-3)

Having been **under foreign rule for centuries** [and they were currently under **Roman rule**] the **people might be thinking** the **Messiah** would come – and **bring back the glory days of King David** – and with **military success** – **kick out the Romans from Israel.**

But in our Old Testament reading, the **picture of the promised Messiah/The Christ is a lot different.**

[So please turn to Isaiah 53:1-12]

The Promised Messiah/Christ must suffer (Isaiah 53:1-12)

Far from being a military hero

Here in Isaiah 53:1-12, the **picture** we have is a **Jesus** – the **Messiah** – the **suffering servant**

[Slide 2-Isaiah 53]

- V3 – He (Jesus) will be **despised** and **rejected** by humankind

- V3 - He will **suffer** and be familiar with **pain**
- V3 - People will **turn their faces away** from Him, like someone of **low esteem**
- V4 - He will **take up OUR pain** and **bear OUR suffering**
- V4 - It will seem like it's **God's plan** for **Jesus to be punished**, stricken and afflicted
- V5 - He will be **pierced** (**hands and feet on a cross**) **for our sins** (iniquities)
- V5 - His **punishment will bring peace** with God (for us) because by His wounds our **relationship with God is healed**

Why does He have to **suffer** and **be punished** like this?

- Because V6 - we are like **lost sheep** who have **gone astray** and gone **our own way**; and we **need a Shepherd to rescue us!**
- Then v7 - Even when He is oppressed and afflicted; He **won't open His mouth to defend Himself**, He will just **go like a lamb to the slaughter**
- And v8 - And when He does suffer, none of His **countrymen will even protest**; they will all just go along with it
- And v8 – He will be **cut off from the land of the living** (die) for the transgressions of the people
- V9 – He will be **assigned a grave with the wicked** – because being **crucified** as He will be – is considered a **curse** - "*anyone who dies on a tree, is cursed*" (Deut 21:23)
- v9 – He will be given a **burial with the rich** (a tomb of a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea (John 19:38-42)
- v9 – Even so, He **won't show any violence or deceit**, despite His suffering

- v10 - It was **God's will that He suffer**, so that His offspring – **US - will live**
- v11 –His **death and suffering will justify** (make people right with God, just as if they had never sinned)

And this picture of Jesus suffering – is **totally different to the picture** – in Peter's mind – and in fact the minds of the people of Israel.

Which brings us to our NT reading

[Please turn to Matthew 16:21-28]

The Messiah/Christ will suffer (Matthew 16:21-23)

[Slide 3-Christ will suffer]

We pick up the story after Peter has identified Jesus as the Messiah/Christ

At v21 – Jesus explains to His disciples – He must go to Jerusalem and **suffer** at the hands of the religious leaders – and **be killed** – and on the third day be **raised to life**

This revelation is **too much for Peter**

See v22 – He **takes Jesus aside** privately **to rebuke Him** – and says this will never happen to Jesus

That's NOT **one of Peter's best moves**

And Peter receives a most severe rebuke from Jesus in v23

Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

Application

There are a few things we can **learn from Peter here**:

- 1st - Peter's probably feeling pretty good after **correctly identifying Jesus** last week – and it's **gone to his head**. He knows Jesus is the Messiah – and He got that from God – but does Peter really know who the Messiah is and what His mission is? Peter doesn't have the full revelation – so He runs with what He knows. **Pride comes before a fall!**
- 2nd – Understandably, Peter doesn't want Jesus to suffer and die.
But Peter doesn't know God's plan is for Jesus to die for the sin of the world and then to raise Him to life after 3 days.
Jesus is to be a spiritual saviour, not a military saviour.
For us it means we have to **put aside human thinking** and think about what God's plans are – not our plans!
- 3rd – Can we be a bit like Peter - and **argue with God** – and **tell God what to do?** We are on **very shaky ground** when we do?
- 4th – Jesus tells Peter “*Get behind me Satan*” – because **Peter is doing the same as Satan** when **Satan tried to tempt Jesus** away from doing God's will (Luke 4:1-13). Jesus is saying to Peter “*you're thinking the same as my adversary (Satan)*”.
Sometimes **Satan can use people closest to us**, even people who love us (like Peter loved Jesus), **to unwittingly try to tempt us away from doing God's will.** We are in a constant spiritual battle.
How did Jesus repel Satan's temptations?
Jesus used God's Word – we must do the same?

If we want to know the mind and will of God; we **must go to His Holy Word**. Then we can say to those who want to tempt us – **NO** – that's not in God's Word!

- 5th – when Jesus says to Peter “*get behind me*” – He wants Peter to “follow” – not “lead”. Jesus doesn't need us to lead him and He doesn't need our advice nor guidance.

How **ironic** – **Peter** - the rock from last week – is now **Peter** the stumbling block!
(pause)

Having told them He must suffer.

Jesus now **tells the disciples** in verses 24 to 28 - that His followers must also suffer

The Messiah/Christ's followers must suffer (Matthew 16:24-28)

If Peter's boat was rocked by Jesus' firm rebuke in v23

[Slide 4-Followers]

V24 – must have come as another bombshell.

Jesus says *Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me*.

Let's consider some of these phrases

1st phrase - **Deny themselves** – In Greek **deny** here means *“to forget one's self; lose sight of one-self and one's own interest”*

We're not talking about giving up chocolate or sugar for Lent

We're not talking about denying ourselves a Sunday Roast – and eating cheese and apples and giving the cost of the Roast to the poor. Even though that's good thing to do.

To **deny self** – is the exact opposite of what Peter was telling Jesus to do. Peter was saying to Jesus *“you're too good to die, we won't let it happen”*. Peter's motivation was admirable – he thought Jesus needed protection.

Jesus is saying to be His disciple – means **abandoning self-preservation**. To deny self is saying *“what happens to me in fulfilling God's will is an irrelevant issue”*.

To follow God's will – Jesus was to die on a Roman Cross, with all the injustice and agony that entailed – but if that fulfilled the Father's will – then die on a Cross - He must and would do!

Self-preservation was not an issue.

The will of God – is not open for change or correction - as Peter suggested.

If - to fulfil God's will – we are to **leave the security of our home and go to some far away mission field with all its difficulties** – then that is what it takes (e.g. Mick Alley – Kenya)

If - to fulfil God's will – we **stay locally with family and friends in a familiar culture** – that is fine too.

To live in relative poverty or wealth is an immaterial detail it's who is running our lives that matters

The goal is that at all times, in all circumstances, and at any cost, we become the means by which God is able to do His work and fulfil His purposes, irrespective of any personal implications to ourselves.

This sounds tough, demanding and unreasonable. And it is! But it is also a gateway to true freedom.

Because at the bottom of so many of our problems – is the faulty attitude that we have about our self. Inside we're always saying "what about me?"

If we adopt this attitude of self-denial – that it's **not** about "me" – **we will face less issues and can focus on what's really important – God's will for us.**

It's still not going to be easy – **but we will have the right attitude towards God and we will have made Jesus the Lord of our life.**

2nd phrase - Take up their cross

Again, **this is what Peter was telling Jesus not to do**. Peter told Jesus that the cross "*shall never happen to you*"

But Jesus says – not only will He have to go to the cross and die – but every person who identifies with Jesus must "*take up their cross*"

We might hear people talking about their aches and pains and saying "*well – that's my cross I have to bear*"

But that's not what "*taking up your cross*" is.

The Cross for Jesus was the ultimate expression of His **obedience to the will of His Father**.

Just before Jesus' arrest and crucifixion – Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane

"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." (Luke 22:42)

There's no question Jesus went willingly to the cross, but He did not go waltzing to the cross, whistling a tune, shrugging His shoulders as though it was easy. He went in great anguish.

To take up the cross is to live our life in utter obedience to the Father, irrespective of the circumstances.

The disciples may not have fully understood what Jesus was saying – but living under Roman rule – every once and a while they might see a man carrying a cross down the road, hounded by soldiers and a mocking crowd. They knew one thing about that man – He would never come back along that road. He would die on the cross, he was carrying.

For us – taking up our cross – is to abandon our plans and resources for the Lord's plans and resources. It's to travel a one-way road. As Jesus says in Luke 9:62 *"No-one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the Kingdom of God"*

Jesus is NO false recruiter.

3rd phrase - Follow Me

When Peter tried to change Jesus' mission – he forgot for one moment – Jesus is the leader and Peter is the follower.

To follow Jesus is to live out Proverbs 3:5-6

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart

and lean not on your own understanding;

⁶ in all your ways submit to him,

and he will make your paths straight.

To follow Jesus – is to trust Him in ALL things.

Commit each day – and each situation in our life – to Him – to trust Him to be totally competent in leading us – even if it doesn't make sense – as Peter thought!

We don't have the big picture – only God does.

(pause)

If v24 was hard enough

Then Jesus hits the disciples with **another doozy in v25:**

For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.

The principle here is that we give our lives away to Jesus and He gives His life away to us.

It's like our old life must die with Jesus on the cross – and then we gain a new life with Jesus – where we are filled with the Holy Spirit – and this new life in Jesus – goes into eternal life in Heaven.

Think about Peter for a minute.

If Peter was to go on living his life, his way, with his agenda, he was free to do so. Jesus would not twist his arm or force true discipleship on him.

Jesus is a Shepherd not a sheep dog.

We are not hemmed in and driven, but follow out of love and implicit trust in Him.

If Peter chose to go down his own path, there may be all kinds of measured successes but he would end up with empty hands. Having kept his life, he would lose it, and everything else with it.

But if Peter would lose his life for Jesus, dump his agenda and give himself away to Jesus and follow Him; this life might deal some rough blows, he might even die on a Roman cross, but he will have found life in its true fulness, not only filled with God himself, but a life that will never end.

As Jesus goes on to say in v26

*What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?
Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?*

We can be the richest or most powerful and influential person in the world – have everything at our feet – but if we don't believe and follow Jesus – our soul won't be going to Heaven. We will literally have the whole world – but lose our soul.

Even though this passage says - as Jesus disciples - we must also suffer

The passage finishes with two positives

In v27 – Jesus says He will come in His Father's glory with His angels and He will reward each person according to what they have done.

This is looking forward to His return as Judge of all humankind.

For those who have committed to following Jesus – the reward will be a positive reward – but for those who have not followed Jesus – this passage is saying – they will lose their soul!

Then in v28 – Jesus promises His disciples that some standing there will not die without seeing the Glory of His Kingdom

Some of those disciples get a glimpse of Jesus' Kingdom glory in the next chapter 17 – the transfiguration.

But what Jesus is most likely talking about is **the events of His death and resurrection in Jerusalem, then His ascension to His Father in Heaven and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost – which ushered in the glory of His Kingdom on Earth and His Church.**

[Slide 5-Summary]

What Jesus is giving us here is **two different approaches to life**

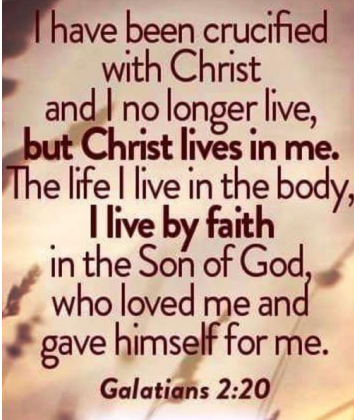
Believer	Non-Believer
Deny yourself	Live for yourself
Take up your cross	Ignore the cross
Follow Jesus	Follow the world
Lose your life for Jesus' sake	Save your life for your own sake
Forsake the world	Gain the world
Keep your soul	Lose your soul
Share His reward and glory	Lose His reward and glory

Conclusion (Galatians 2:20)

If Jesus suffered all of Isaiah 53 in our place, **don't we owe a response of gratitude and attitude of self-denial, and to take up own cross, follow Him, and commit our lives totally to Him.**

As Galatians 2:20 puts it – and we'll finish with this:

[Slide 6-Galatians 2:20]



I have been crucified
with Christ
and I no longer live,
but Christ lives in me.
The life I live in the body,
I live by faith
in the Son of God,
who loved me and
gave himself for me.
Galatians 2:20

Let's pray

Father God, thank you for sending Jesus – the Messiah – the Christ – the Suffering Servant, who laid down His life for us to be free from the punishment of sin.

Help us to respond to Jesus this morning –by giving ourselves completely to Him - by denying ourselves, taking up our cross and following Him.

Thank you that Jesus lives in us and help us to live by faith in Him and not by what we see – not by what the world offers -but to trust in Him alone.

In His name, we pray. Amen.