

Isaiah's Passion History

Sermon Text: Isaiah 52:13-15 ¹³ Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high. ¹⁴ Just as many were astonished at you, So His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men; ¹⁵ So shall He sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; For what had not been told them they shall see, And what they had not heard they shall consider.

Sermon Theme: Isaiah Reveals Contrasting Views of Christ

1. In the depths of His humiliation

2. In His great exaltation

In the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, who gives us reason to gather in God's house during Lent, dear fellow redeemed;

The season of Lent is that special time of the church year when we meditate on the passion history of Jesus Christ. The many events surrounding the last days and hours of Jesus' life are of particular interest to us, because they represent the climax and perfect completion of Jesus' redemptive work for all the world. May God help us to never look lightly upon or grow tired of this Gospel record, but rather grow in our appreciation and thankfulness for it.

In order to help us recapture and more fully appreciate what Jesus underwent for us as our Savior, during our Lenten services we will be meditating on what could be called the passion account according to the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. Isaiah has been referred to as the evangelist of the Old Testament, for throughout his writings we find the good news of Jesus Christ. Even though Isaiah lived 700 years prior to the birth of Christ, yet through inspiration of God he was able to write about future events and conditions of Jesus' life in such a way that it sounds as though it had already taken place. With his vivid and accurate descriptions of Jesus' sufferings and death it was as if Isaiah had been standing at the foot of the cross at Calvary.

In our text for this evening, Isaiah presents a striking contrast in the way people would be viewing Jesus, first in the great depths of His humiliation and then later on in His great exaltation.

God the Father, who is speaking here in our text, begins by directing our attention to the focal point of these verses, namely Jesus Christ. He refers to Jesus as being His Servant. Looking ahead to the fulfilment of the servant status of Christ, we read in Paul's letter to the Philippians as he writes concerning Jesus, "who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (2:6-8 ESV) Even though Jesus was in very nature God, equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, He willingly lowered Himself to the degree of being a servant. He did

this in order to carry out the heavenly Father's gracious will and plan for our eternal redemption.

In all of this, not only did Jesus become the servant of His Father, but He also made Himself a servant of every sinner in this world. Is not this truly amazing that Jesus the Lord of heaven and earth would show such tremendous love for us sinners by making the great sacrifice of setting aside the full use of His divine power, glory, and majesty to become a lowly, humble servant.

If the holy Son of God would have come into this world in all His divine glory, no sinner could have stood before Him and lived. So then, instead of causing death to mortals by coming in this fashion, Jesus humbled Himself as a servant in order that we might live through Him. From the lowly animal manger to the accursed cross Jesus lived the life of a lowly servant so that we might live and reign with Him in heaven.

The great depths of Jesus' life of humiliation culminated with His sufferings and death on the cross. Isaiah writes that "Just as many were astonished at you, So His visage (His physical appearance) was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men." (52:14) The passerby looking up at the wretched form on the cross was shocked and appalled in astonishment at what he saw. Jesus' appearance and form were inhumanly disfigured. His body had been severely beaten and mutilated by His enemies. And His face was distorted from suffering the torments of hell for every sin of the world. Beaten and hanging on the cross as a common criminal He appeared as the lowest of all humans. If one had not fully realized what was happening to Jesus and why, one could well have thought He was being punished for some cruel and despicable crime He had committed.

The heavenly Father having looked ahead in time to His Servant's life of humiliation said concerning Jesus in verse 13, "Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently." With these words God the Father reveals that Jesus would successfully accomplish His earthly mission of our redemption, for to act prudently or to act wisely has the ultimate result of success. His Servant's wise and prudent actions are further attested to by God in Isaiah 41:1-4, where He declares concerning the promised Savior, "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged, Till He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlands shall wait for His law." In every circumstance Jesus always said and did the right thing so that when everything was said and done from His perfect keeping of the law of God for us in our place to His suffering the penalty for all our sins on the cross, Jesus finally said in the end, "It is finished." And the heavenly Father said concerning Jesus and His work of redemption, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." On this basis God the Father then declares the whole world of sinners not guilty, forgiven of their sins through Jesus Christ.

Because of Jesus' perfect completion of His mission, He did not remain in the

depths of humiliation, for God declares in our text, “He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.” Jesus did not remain in the lowly grave of the dead, but was raised in glory and exalted on high, sitting on the right hand of God the Father. Paul testifies concerning Jesus’ exaltation when he writes in Philippians 2, “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Vv.9-11) In His state of humiliation Jesus was made to be the lowest of all creatures, but in His glorious state of exaltation He was raised to the highest position above all and over all.

The way in which mankind would now be looking upon Jesus in His exalted glory is indeed a striking contrast to the way they looked upon Him in His humiliation. Following along in our text we see this contrast presented in verses 14 & 15, “Just as many were astonished at you, So His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men; So shall He sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; For what had not been told them they shall see, And what they had not heard they shall consider.” Even as many on the one extreme were shocked and appalled at the sight of Jesus’ deep humiliation so also many on the other extreme behold His exalted glory, standing in silent awe and wonder at Him. This speechless astonishment is not only experienced by one race and nation, but by all the nations of the world. Among them are not only commoners, but also kings as well.

This reaction of the many nations and kings is brought about by what Isaiah calls, His sprinkling of many nations. This sprinkling of nations is the preaching of the Gospel of salvation. This picture is similar to Moses preaching of the Word of God to the Jews, saying, “Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. Let my teaching drop as the rain, My speech distill as the dew, As raindrops on the tender herb, And as showers on the grass.” (Deut. 32:1,2)

The only difference in the Isaiah text is that the Word of God would be preached to every nation and not just to the Jews. The Gospel message had long been a hidden mystery to many until it was proclaimed and believed throughout the earth. Paul writes to the Romans of this, “Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith.” (16:25,26)

In our day there are still millions all over the world who do not know or believe in Christ’s redemptive work during His state of humiliation or His present exalted reign in glory. Many know of the historic Jesus who lived and died in Palestine. But most of them cannot see beyond the human nature of Jesus. They look upon Him merely as a great prophet who lived a fine life, but who then quite tragically died at the hands of the Romans. They cannot see the glory of God shining through the person of Jesus Christ, whether it be with regard to His life, His miracles, His teachings, or His death and

resurrection from the dead. For some it is simply a lack of correct knowledge of Jesus, while for others it is a matter of blind unbelief which causes them to reject the simple truths revealed in the Bible.

How very critical it is for our fellow sinners to be led by the Spirit of God to behold in Jesus the glory of God and His blessed gift of salvation. For as Peter declares concerning Jesus, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

During this Lenten season and beyond may the Holy Spirit continue to work mightily in our hearts, enabling us to abide in the faith that embraces the crucified and risen Lord Jesus as our Savior and to rejoice with joy and thanksgiving for Jesus humbling of Himself even to the point of death and for rising victoriously so that we might have life and salvation through Him. And by the mercies of God may those who are still living in spiritual darkness be led to behold the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ and to believe in Him as their Savior. Amen.