

### **Isaiah's Passion History**

**Sermon Text: Isaiah 53:1-3** Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? <sup>2</sup>For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him. <sup>3</sup>He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

### **Sermon Theme: Isaiah Reveals the Man of Sorrows who Gives us Joy and Gladness**

In the name of our sorrowful Servant Jesus Christ dear fellow redeemed;

When we think of Jesus, we might picture Him as being the personification of joy. The psalmist says of the Lord, "In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." (16:11) Jesus, who is in very nature God, is the very fountainhead and source of all joy and gladness. Think also of where He came from before He descended here on earth. He came from the eternal realms of glory where there is perfect joy.

And yet, when Jesus lived among mankind here below, He did not always experience joy. The prophet Isaiah speaks of Him in our text as a Man of sorrows. This does not mean Jesus always went around with a frown on His face. There were certainly many times Jesus found joy while growing up in the God fearing home of Mary and Joseph. Even as there were also many occasions for joy when Jesus was with His beloved disciples and dear friends. However, there were also many events that filled Jesus with much grief and sadness.

One of the major reasons for Jesus' sorrow was due to the way both He and His teachings were oftentimes received by the Jews whom He had been sent to. Many of them were offended by the message He proclaimed to them. Since a majority of them had an entirely different expectation of the Messiah than what Jesus was and did, they rejected Him. This was not the fault of God, because through the prophets, such as Isaiah, a very clear picture of the Messiah was revealed.

In verse 2 of our text, Isaiah writes, "For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground." These two pictures from nature present the lowly background and condition in which Jesus sprang forth and grew. First of all, He came forth like "a root out of dry ground." This picture is very similar to another prophecy of Isaiah where he writes of Jesus, "There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of His roots." (11:1) Jesus was born of the royal family of King David who was the son of Jesse. But at the time of His birth His parentage was not so royal or so glorious, for the reign of David's family was at an end. Jesus was also born to a very poor and lowly family. Thus the picture of the lifeless stump and the dry ground.

As far as the conditions under which Jesus the Messiah was to grow up Isaiah says,

“He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant.” When a tender plant or the shoot on a tree springs forth, it goes unnoticed. So also Jesus grew up inconspicuously along with other children in the small town of Nazareth.

In the second part of verse 2, Isaiah goes on to say concerning Jesus, “He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men.” Many Jews expected the Messiah to live in splendor and grandeur, and establish a kingdom like the glory days of King David and King Solomon. But when they saw the outward features of Jesus, there was nothing in Him that attracted them. He came as a lowly, humble servant. Therefore when the Jews saw the lowliness of Jesus, they were offended by it and looked upon Him with scorn and rejected Him. This caused Jesus to be filled with grief and sorrow, for the Jews were supposed to be God’s chosen people and He was their only hope for salvation.

Jesus was not only scorned and shunned by the common Jews, but also by the prominent leading ones. One Pharisee asked a question concerning Jesus to which he expected a negative response, “Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him?” (Jn. 7:48) When they saw Jesus meeting and eating with the low-life tax collectors and sinners, they wouldn’t have anything to do with Him. They had no time for someone who had come to seek and to save those who are lost. What a sad state of affairs for the high and mighty to fail to realize they were part of the lost sinners Jesus had come to save.

On Tuesday of Holy Week, Jesus was filled with great sorrow over the unbelief of Jerusalem and the coming judgment they would be visited with on account of their rejection of Jesus. He could be heard weeping and lamenting over the city, saying, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!” (Mt. 23:37) “If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.” (Lk. 19:41-44)

We might have expected the city of Jerusalem to be receptive to the teachings of Christ, for this was the holy city where the temple of God and the learned religious leaders were. But that which was found among the people was hypocrisy, dishonesty, and cynicism. The Jewish leaders saw no need for a Savior, because they considered themselves to be their own savior. On this account the city could be characterized as a spiritual slum.

This is the same kind of treatment Jesus receives from many in our day. While Jesus is regarded by many as morally upright and a fine humanitarian, they refuse to acknowledge Him as their Savior who came to save them from their sinful and lost condition.

There was also reason for a sorrowful heart in Jesus when He witnessed a large defection of His disciples. In John 6 we read of this, “Therefore many of His disciples,

when they heard this, said, ‘This is a hard saying; who can understand it?’ When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, ‘Does this offend you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you who do not believe.’ For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. And He said, ‘Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.’ From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.” (Vv.60-66) These erstwhile disciples stopped following Jesus, because there were certain teachings of Jesus which they found to be too hard to swallow.

There is a striking similarity between these offended disciples and some today who espouse being Christians. They say that they believe in Jesus, but they are unwilling to accept all His teachings, because they go against the grain of their sin-blinded eyes. While they claim to be followers of Christ, yet in many respects they have stopped following Him.

Throughout Jesus’ life He was despised and rejected. However, their scorn became more intense and apparent in the last hours of His life. Surely Jesus was filled with great sorrow when His fellow Jews mocked Him, mistreated Him, and cried out for Him to be crucified.

In our day, the Lord Jesus continues to feel great sorrow over any who reject Him as their Lord and Savior, because they are cutting themselves off from their only hope of salvation. Jesus also feels great concern for those who confess a faith in Him, but are unwilling to faithfully abide in His teachings, because in so doing they are placing their spiritual and eternal welfare in jeopardy. Jesus’ teachings not only set us free, but they also keep us free.

On the other hand, Jesus experiences great joy and gladness whenever people turn to Him with repentance and faith, and thus receive His precious gifts of forgiveness and salvation. Listen to what Jesus says about a single sinner who repents of his sins and turns to Him in faith, “I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.” (Lk. 15:7) The Lord also rejoices over those who willingly and cheerfully follow Him, faithfully adhere to His teachings, deny themselves and bear the Christian cross. In so doing, they are showing love, devotion, and gratitude to Jesus for His work of redemption.

That believers give rise to such joy and gladness in heaven is not due to our own efforts. Our faith, love and devotion is a result of the Holy Spirit’s work in our hearts. The Spirit of God brings us to faith and keeps us in the faith as we give ear to the Gospel of Christ and receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Not only is Jesus happy when we look to Him in faith and follow Him in love, but we also experience happiness of heart. In a familiar Bible passage used frequently in our worship services, Jesus says to us, “Blessed (or happy) are they who hear the Word of

God and keep it.” As we continue to hear and cling to the precious teachings of Christ, our hearts are gladdened by the good news of God’s unconditional love, His infinite mercy, and boundless grace. As we put our trust in the Lord’s promise of His abiding care for us, we are put at ease, being delivered from fears, worries, and anxieties. But most important of all, as we look to our Savior Jesus in faith, we experience the joy of our eternal salvation through Him.

May we ever listen attentively to God’s word of grace and truth so that the Holy Spirit continues to do His work of enabling us to remain in the Christian faith to the very end of our lives. Then we will enter that glorious world of heaven where there will never again be any kind of sorrow, but only perfect joy and gladness. God grant this to us all for Jesus’ sake. Amen.