

**The Prophecy**  
The Cross: Lenten Series  
Isaiah 53:1-12  
March 17, 2019

Welcome to the 2<sup>nd</sup> week in our sermon series on the Cross. Over the next few weeks we are getting ready for Good Friday and Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection on Easter Sunday. Each week we are discussing a different aspect of The Cross and its meanings for our lives. Today we are talking about The Prophecy. Jesus' life, death and resurrection didn't come in a vacuum and it didn't just happen in 33 ad. As we talked about last week in The Plan, this one-time event was set in motion millennia before. So today we are looking at one of the many Prophecies on the Cross in the Old Testament, specifically Isaiah 53.

By the time of Isaiah 53, the people of Israel are in exile living in Babylon and their homes have been destroyed. Jerusalem was destroyed, the people are enslaved and sent to live far from home. In the middle of this time called the Exile, Isaiah writes this prophecy often dubbed the Suffering Servant. This was often considered a true time of desperation and hopelessness in the people of Israel. And into this time of what seemed like hopelessness, the prophet Isaiah preaches the Word of God about a Savior who will come who will bear all their suffering and restore them as a people.

One of the topics that is going to come up several times throughout this series is that the cross has many depths to it. While we can describe what Jesus did on the cross in one sentence, there is also a wide variety of *meanings* for our lives. Theologians have tried to tie down the cross to just one thing, but God does amazing things by dying on a cross and offers us so much. He died not just to forgive our sins, but to offer us unconditional love and to offer us a life in eternity. And so, this morning we are going to look at four *meanings* of the cross and how they impact our lives and the way we live.

The first *meaning* of the cross is one of the oldest written theologies of the crucifixion and comes from three Ancient Church Fathers; Irenaeus, Origen and Augustine. Like we did last week, they start all the way back at Creation and the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were enticed by Satan and ate the fruit. And from that time, until the time of the cross, all humanity is held hostage by evil and sin. There was nothing that anyone could do to reach salvation. And when Jesus died on the cross, he literally stepped in for us who were held hostage by Satan and evil and sin and paid the price himself on the cross. He ransomed himself for us. We owed a debt because we all fall short of the plan and only Jesus' death can save us.

**RANSOM MEANING = HELD HOSTAGE BY SIN: JESUS' DEATH ON THE CROSS = JESUS FREES US FROM SIN.**  
***Yet when his life is made an offering for sin...*** (Isaiah 53:1-12 NLT)

Now what does this mean for our lives – sin clearly still exists in this world. We still make terrible choices don't we. We yell at our family when we get home from work and are tired, we gossip about a coworker or church stuff. Because of the cross our sins do not condemn us. Because of Jesus in our lives and his death and resurrection that sin we commit can be a once and done act. It is for us to turn to Jesus on the cross, repent, ask for forgiveness. Our Ransom recognizes that while Jesus' death was once and done two thousand years ago, he steps in to free us each and every day.

Our second *meaning* is very similar to the Ransom and it is officially called Substitutionary meaning. Substitutionary meaning recognizes that Jesus substitutes himself for our sin but, doesn't limit that action to just a paying the ransom. John Calvin wanted to remind all of us that Jesus' death, yes bought us and paid for us with his blood, but his actions were out of love and not any sense of guilt or obligation. Substitution reminds us that he substituted himself on our behalf to pay for our sin because he loves us so much. He takes our punishment out of love for us. This theology states that we cannot pay the debt we owe to God for our sin so, God's love stepped in and took the punishment that we deserved and took it on himself. I think most closely of the very famous verse, John 3:16, ***For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.***

**SUBSTITUTIONARY MEANING = SOMEONE NEEDS TO PAY: JESUS' DEATH ON THE CROSS = JESUS' LOVE INTERCEDES.**  
***All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all.*** (Isaiah 53:6 NLT)

He who loves us substituted himself in our place. His arms, wide open, offer us the forgiveness we so desperately need, but also offer us the love to continue our lives each day. Jesus became our substitute and closes the gap between us and the Father.

Our third meaning is a Moral one that teaches us that Jesus' life and especially death are a moral example of how we are to live. This theology reminds us that Jesus was fully human and fully divine. As fully God, Jesus forgives our sins by his death and offers us eternal life. AND as fully human, Jesus sets the perfect moral example for our lives. This theology reminds us that we are to follow his example each and every day. His death shows us how to live and our lives are to show others how to live and point toward Jesus.

**MORAL MEANING = HUMANITY DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO LIVE RIGHT: JESUS' DEATH ON THE CROSS IS THE EXAMPLE FOR OUR LIVES.**

*...the LORD's good plan will prosper in his hands.* (Isaiah 53:10 NLT)

This takes the meaning of the Cross into our every day interactions with others. Jesus' death on the cross is the ultimate example of living the faith. Of following and giving absolutely everything, even to the point of death, to love others and serve them. Isaiah tells us that it's okay to take on other people's pain in this world. That the outstretched arms that offer love to us on the cross is to be turned to the world we live in by the way we live and love.

And our final theology comes from one of my favorite theologians, NT Wright, from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. He's dubbed it Revolutionary meaning of the cross to remind us of the revolutionary nature of Jesus' death. That Jesus was so scandalous and such a revolutionary to the world that they killed him in the most horrible way because they found his message so offensive. Isaiah 53:3 says, ***He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed.*** Jesus' death on the cross heals the entire world. In Jesus' revolutionary death and resurrection, he ushers in a brand-new world, one we call the Kingdom of God. We really do live in the Kingdom of God here and now. I know it may not feel that way. I know, it's a revolutionary thought, that we can live like this place is not our home and still make an impact while we do.

**Revolutionary Meaning = Jesus ushers in a new world we call the Kingdom of God.**

***He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed.*** Isaiah 53:3

When our friends are being stopped by the police because of the color of their skin and children in Syria are dying at the hands of an unjust government and our closest neighbors to the south in Haiti are dying of starvation and rioting in the streets it sure doesn't feel like God's Kingdom. AND yet, when we give a family a meal, that's the Kingdom of God breaking in. When one child is plucked from abject poverty in Sierra Leone because you sponsor a child, God's Kingdom is very real and very present. When a little kid gets a hug from one of our teachers and that is the only loving hug we know they will get that week, that's God right here and right now. To live in the kingdom of God is to see the glimmers where God breaks into this world because Jesus' so revolutionized the world that he said here's what love looks like, now go and do likewise.

We may feel hopeless when we turn on the news or watch what's happening around the world. And we just can't tune ourselves out to the pain in this world and say I've got Jesus that's enough. For us as believers in this amazing Jesus who gave his life on the cross, it's to live as different people. To say to the evil and the oppressive powers of this world, you think you're in charge, but I know who my God is and to whom I belong. And then it's to live so differently as to try to bring about the Kingdom here and now. And it's easy to look at our world and get overwhelmed as to how you can make a difference. But it's to start with what you can do, what is your passion and to work with Jesus to bring the Kingdom here and now. So, how will you take this forgiveness, this love and this revolution into your life this week?