

A servant grew up before them. Humble in appearance. He did not open his mouth before those who inflicted harm upon him, although his mouth was never once filled with deceit. And inflict harm they did, to the point that he was essentially unrecognizable. This servant was rejected by all mankind.

Rarely, if ever, would you find a king willing to trade in his royal position to become a lowly servant. Certainly you could not track one down who would trade in dazzling splendor for a death sentence. As a servant you could go to the king and hope that he would assist you in your need, however severe, by giving out of the riches that he has, but you wouldn't dare to suggest switching spots.

In our modern era you may go to the doctor seeking help. There's knowledge along with access to medicine and methods within that doctor's office. You know that no matter what is available to you the solution does not involve the doctor taking whatever is ailing you and completely transferring it to someone else. Even if it were possible, how could you find someone who would volunteer to take that on? I doubt that even the doctor, the one whose job it is to heal you, would offer to do such a thing. Even if someone did step up, I imagine that you would feel guilty - being free at once, but knowing another now carries the burden you did. Especially when that burden that you carried was terminal. No chance of recovery.

This message today is shocking! More thrilling and jaw-dropping than a Hollywood-produced film that keeps you in suspense and twists the plot at the end beyond what you imagined going into it. This message is so much more because it's real, every high, every low. Jesus did what others would not. Jesus did what others could not!

"He took up our pain and bore our suffering." This pain and suffering needs a name. Mostly due to the fact that we could provide any number of examples in our lives when we have experienced pain and suffering. This verse is not pointing to those kind of anxieties in life that Jesus tells us to cast on him because he cares for you. Greater description comes straight from the text - this is our disease, our sickness. This is our condition. Not something that comes and goes within the flow of daily life but something that has stuck around and has left us stuck without any means to escape. Our sickness from sin separates us from God.

The one who took on our pain and suffering, our sinful state, was punished, stricken, and afflicted by God. Walk with me as we go to see this at Calvary, the hill where Jesus gave up his very life for you. It wasn't much earlier that Jesus had ascended another mountain to reveal his glory to some of his disciples to the point that Peter couldn't help but exclaim, "Lord, it is good for us to be here!" But now while we are at the top of Calvary where Jesus the Son of God is suspended on a cross and his glory is hidden behind streams of blood and the pain he endures, Peter is nowhere to be found, and both you and me hesitate along with the disciples to look at Jesus' face, to look him in the eyes and say, "Lord, it is good for us to be here."

For "he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities." In light of this passage and the reality of Jesus being put to death in our place can sin be viewed lightly? Does sin, the breaking of God's holy commands, not factor in to our standing with God and our relationship with our Creator? Would God be acting justly if he were to quickly look the other way at the appearance of sin and to

brush off the soot that has stained us from head to toe and let us gently fall back into the very mess we made? No, sin is a heavy burden. There is no such thing as a light sin. Sin is dark. As dark as the hours when Jesus suffered on the cross. And it is heavy. As heavy as the weight of all mankind's guilt and shame carried on the shoulders of our Savior. "He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities." These are not sins ignored, but sins paid for!

Paid for in full. "The punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed." That strange and wonderful process of healing brought about by wounds not our own. A gift of eternal value given to people who have no chance of repaying the favor. Our God putting everything on the line for his own creation that rebelled against his ultimate authority and unending glory. Jesus made the necessary payment for our sins, restoring us from our awful, sin-sick, deadly condition and bringing us to life, a life that will last, one that comes with the promise that we are healed!

God knows how badly we need to be healed. Isaiah plainly professes, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way." We've followed what feels right to us, changed direction on a whim, and strayed far from our Loving Shepherd. Many times we stubbornly forge our own path that leads to destruction, and much like sheep, we are often completely unaware of the danger we're in. The hope of saving ourselves does not exist. That's why, out of his great love, God interceded for us and took action, "and the Lord has laid upon him (Jesus!) the iniquity of us all." Jesus paid for every sin. God directed his righteous anger over sin at his Son instead of his sheep.

Relief comes at a great cost. The cost of a life, the perfect life of Jesus. Our solemn walk to see him die and be buried impresses on us the depth of our sin. When we are reminded of this truth we can easily share in the grief that the followers of Jesus felt as he was taken away and unjustly sentenced to death. His punishment should have been ours. His pierced hands and feet was our rightful lot. He was abandoned by God the Father and experienced the extreme pain of paying for the full penalty of sin. All for the purpose of producing peace in abundance. God did not spare his Son, but gave him up for us all so that we are healed. We will wake up with this relief tomorrow, on Easter morning, and every day after with thankfulness in our hearts because God has saved us by sending Jesus for us. By his wounds we are healed. Amen.