

Title: No, it's not fair, it's grace.
Text: Isaiah 53.4-6
Theme: Christ died for us.
Series: Isaiah #45
Prop Stmt: The radical grace by which we are saved is the radical grace that we are called to reflect.
Aim: Exalt the Servant so that our hearts adore and trust him!

Read Text:

Hansel and Gretel is a children's folk story that originated in Germany. They were brother and sister, the children of a woodcutter, whose wife had died and he remarried the proverbial evil stepmother. There was not enough food in the home for everyone, so the stepmother decided that the children were to be taken deep into the woods and left to die. Hansel, over-hearing the plan, filled his pockets with pebbles and on the trip through the forest kept dropping them so that he and Gretel could retrace them back home, which they did.

When you read the Old Testament, you see all of these pebbles that lead us to Christ. The Old Testament is one long story that not only helps us understand the historical setting for the coming of Christ, but so much more than that, the Old Testament helps us understand how much we need to Christ. The Old Testament book of Isaiah is the writings of a prophet who lived in Judah around 700 BC. The Northern Kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrian Empire and his nation (Judah) was going to fall to the Babylonians. How could God's people be so utterly devastated? The answer? Because they had rebelled against God. So, how could they be rescued? Only God can do that? And here in this text we a picture of how God is going to do that. He is going to rescue them through a Savior who is sent to them, but who becomes so closely identified with them, that he takes their sin and brokenness upon himself. But if you are tempted to say, "So what", you need to realize this; the Jews are a picture of us. God set it up that way. This Savior is so incredible that he provides a rescue for every single person who believes in him. But our need is so deep, that he paid the ultimate price for our rescue. The fourth Song about the Servant and most intense. (This morning, three of five sections)

1. **Christ died in spite of us.** – 4

Verse 4 has four lines and divides neatly in half. The first part speaks of what Christ did for us and the second part describes how we (the human race) responded to that. If you look carefully at the verse you will notice this contrast between he (Christ – singular) and our/we (plural).

Verse 4a – What Christ did for us
response

Verse 4b – What we did to him

“Surely” – the surprise in all of this (3) is that what we despised and rejected was in reality the rejection of seeing ourselves on Christ. We hid our faces because we could not bear to see what our sin really looks like. But, we did not realize that it was our sin that we were seeing. We looked at Christ and considered him to be cursed by God. We considered His punishment to be justified and His afflictions to be appropriate when ironically, He was cursed by God and his punishment was fitting, but not because he was the one who had sinned, but because we were the ones who sinned.

A. **Christ died because he was considered guilty of our sin.** (4a)

We are together in our griefs and sorrows. There are others who empathize with our problems. No one could empathize with Christ. He died alone for that which he did not cause. This verse explains a very important truth. We call it imputation.

Have you ever ordered coffee at More-bucks (Starbucks)? They basically offer three sizes. In America, when you are offered 3-sizes, they are most likely to be small, medium, and large; but not at Starbucks. At Starbucks they are called (anyone know?) tall, grande, and venti. Two of those are Italian words since, after all, Starbucks started in Seattle, Washington. (I do not get it either.) But my point is simply this. If you can learn to order coffee using Italian words that most of us do not know the meaning of, you can learn good theological terms that are not only helpful and important, but they are in English. The first one is imputation. Here is an example of it.

Do you remember James Holmes? He is the guy who carefully planned and carried out the killing of twelve people and the wounding of dozens more in a crowded movie theater in Aurora, Colorado earlier this summer. His parents are at a complete loss to explain his motivation and actions. How, can they ever “get on with life”? Their son, not them, committed the crimes, but they will always carry in and on their lives the guilt of their son’s actions. In their case, it is not legal guilt. But they are viewed as, or known as the parents of the monster. That is called imputation, which means *belonging to another*. In the case of James Holmes, his parents are perceived by some to be associated with his guilt. In the case of Christ, he is not only perceived as being guilty, but he is actually counted as guilty. Our sin was imputed on to Christ. Our sin belonged to him. He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. The imputation of our sin to Christ, was both legal and personal. The wages of sin is death. Christ died because he was considered as being guilty of our sins but he also personally experienced the weight of our sins. Sin causes grief. Sin is the source of the deepest sorrow.

B. **We judged Christ as guilty.** (4b)

We looked at Christ and esteemed him as one who was stricken by God, smitten by God, afflicted by God because we figured that he was guilty. Sometimes we use the word “stricken” to refer to a disease. “He was struck down with leprosy” or some

other dreadful disease. That is how we viewed Christ. He had some awful condition that was repulsive to us (3). And since he was receiving all of this punishment (and we weren't), we were therefore, morally superior. Isn't that how we tend to think?

Job's friends did. Job was the guy in the Old Testament, who, in the matter of a day lost all of his wealth and family, except his wife. His friends kept pressing him to confess the deep, dark sins that he was hiding because God was obviously punishing him for them. That is how we tend to think. Remember the blind man in John 9? The disciples asked Christ, "who sinned, this man or his parents?" If you take a logic and debate class, that question is called a "false either or". Jesus said, "neither".

Now, you are ready to understand why Isaiah uses the word "surely" because here is the amazing part. We recoiled at seeing Christ because we considered him to be polluted and defiled and we did not want to be associated with one who was so despicable, but ironically, we were right (like the friends of James Holmes). Christ was guilty, but it was our sin that made him guilty. This Servant is judged by God as a sinner and is afflicted, but it was because we are sinners and he was counted as being guilty (imputed) of our sins.

So, here is the perfect, sinless, Son of God, the King of glory, who bent over, who stooped down, who not only became one of us, but he bore our griefs as his own, and carried our sorrows. It was not our idea. This was not our plan. This is what he determined to do. It was not his response to our request. It was his love in spite of our animosity. And we reacted to this incredible, act of love with spite and moral superiority. That's not fair! No it is not. It is grace.

What does this teach us about Christ?

How does this inform the way we respond to those who spite us?

2. **Christ died for us.** – 5

Verse 5, like verse 4 has four lines and two halves. The first two lines tell us what was done to Christ and the second two lines tell us what the result was.

Verse 5a – What was done to Christ
result

Verse 5b – What was done for us

A. **Christ died a crushing death for our sins.** (5a)

When you look at the first part of verse you see these words: wounded, crushed transgressions, and iniquities. Wounded and crushed describe the manner of Christ's death. He was fatally pierced for us. He was trampled by our sin. He was completely buried under the weight of our sin. These words describe the nature of his death using the most violent terms possible. To say that Christ was crushed means that Christ was pulverized. Why? For our iniquities.

Our sins are both transgressions and iniquities. A transgression is not an accident. It is not a character flaw, personal weakness, mistake or oops. Transgression is the deliberate and willful flaunting of the law of God. Transgression is sinning with such boldness that we dare God to act. Iniquity has the idea of being completely out of line. That is, we are so corrupted that we cannot think straight or walk straight. We are bent toward perversion. And Christ died for that.

We tend to wink, nod, wince a bit, or get a sheepish grin when talking about our sin. This verse is humbling isn't it? This is a picture of how serious our sin is. But...

B. Christ secured an amazing salvation. (5b)

There is word-picture here in verse five that invites us to reflect. Chastisement means to punish, to correct, to inflict penalty upon someone. Christ was chastised. Christ was the recipient of this conflict, which enabled us to be the recipient of peace. The word for stripes refers to wounds that are open and untreated. Isaiah used these same words in chapter one to describe the effects of sin on the people. They were suffering because of their sin. They were being crushed by their sin, but it was not helping. So, Christ takes our sin and with it comes all of the consequences of it. He takes that too. But here is the irony. His open wounds are how we are healed. The dreadful consequences of our sin bring grief. But when Christ takes our sin upon himself and dies for it, our curse is removed.

This statement has been used by some to prove that Christ died to remove all of our sickness. The truth is, Christ died in order to remove every facet of our sin and its consequence from off our record. Christ died to benefit us. Therefore, Christ died to both remove sin from us and to purchase eternal benefits for us. When you realize that there is nothing that you can do to pay for your sin and you trust in Christ because you believe that he paid it for you, you are immediately forgiven and counted as a child of God. That is the part of your salvation that you get, right now. But, we do not receive all of the benefits of our salvation immediately. One of the benefits that we will experience when we are with God in eternity is that we will be saved from the very presence of sin. We will not be tempted. We will not be sinned against and we will not sin - ever. We will not groan or sorrow or experience agony in any form. We will not be subject to sickness because we will have glorified bodies. We do not have those - yet. Romans 8:9-11; 2 Corinthians 4:7-5:9.

When you put verses 4 and 5 together you get this: Christ had no part of our sin, and yet he took it upon himself. We had no part in his death and yet we get credit for it. This verse teaches us another very important truth. We call it substitutionary atonement. Let me give you an example.

On March 12, 2009, Bernie Madoff pled guilty to eleven federal felonies including, securities fraud, wire fraud mail fraud, money laundering, making false statements, perjury, theft from an employee benefit plan and making false filings with the

Securities and Exchange Commission. All told, it is believed that Madoff defrauded his clients of over \$17 billion dollars in his Ponzi scheme. His investment company, it turned out, was, in his words, “a big lie.” Let’s say that the judge ordered him to make restitution or go to jail for the rest of his life. (For the record, he was given a sentence of 150 years, and with good behavior will be eligible for release when he turns 201. Hey! Who knows, after Obamacare kicks in, we will all live forever – right?) At his sentencing, Bernie told his victims that he was sorry and added, “I know that doesn’t help you.” No, it doesn’t! If Bernie could make restitution, if he could pay what he owed, then he could have made atonement for his sin. Bernie’s problem is that he owes a debt that he cannot pay. His only hope is for someone to pay the debt for him, otherwise he is going to die in prison. Imagine that at his sentencing, the judge, took out his own checkbook and wrote a check for \$17 billion dollars and deposited it with the court on Bernie’s behalf. The judge would be both just and merciful because the law would be satisfied and Bernie could be set free. Of course, we would all wonder where he got the \$17 billion from. But, if the judge did that for Bernie, we would call that substitutionary atonement. Substitutionary atonement means to pay the debt for someone else.

When Christ died on the cross, his death paid the debt of our sin. He died in my place. He was pierced. He was crushed. He was chastised and he was wounded. But through his death, my debt is paid, my guilt is removed, my sin is pardoned, and I am at peace with God.

That’s not fair. No it is not. It is grace.

3. **Christ died because of us.** – 6

Verse 6 only has 3 lines. The first two describe what we have done and then has a long third line that summarizes this entire section. The meter of poetry is broken so that our attention is drawn to this truth. The verse depicts two things.

Verse 6a – What we have done to God
response

Verse 6b – What God has done to Christ for us

Verse 6 is the focal point of this little section and you can see why, because the language becomes even more personal. “We have turned – every one”. That speaks of you and me. We are in this.

A. **We turned away from God.** (6a)

Our way is not God’s way. Our way is the way of a sheep. It is humbling to be called sheep, because unlike most animals, sheep have no natural defenses. They are not fast, they cannot fight, they cannot hide, and have poor depth perception. Sheep tend to think about only one thing at a time, and usually it is eating grass. If frightened, they tend to take off running – in any direction! They are easily misled, and

extremely vulnerable. That is us. We, who pride ourselves on being capable and resilient, are in reality, like sheep. We cannot defend ourselves against our own sin. We are born with a bent, an inclination to sin.

B. **God is merciful.** (6b)

There is one more word that I want you to learn this morning. (review: imputation – to be given that which belonged to another; sacrificial atonement – to pay the debt for someone else) The word is expiation. Expiation means the removal of sin. Here we see, that we, like sheep have gone astray. We have lived sinful lives that deserve the righteous punishment of God. But, what did God do? He expiated our sin. He removed our sin from us and placed it on Christ. The LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. That's not fair. No it is not. It is grace.

Conclusion

1. This is what sin does.
 - a. It causes grief
 - b. It causes sorrow
 - c. It wounds
 - d. It crushes
 - e. It causes lost-ness and isolation.
 - f. It causes rebellion

2. This is what Christ has done.
 - a. He bore the consequences of our sin.
 - b. He suffered the punishment for our sin.
 - c. He brought us peace.
 - d. He brought us healing
 - e. He removed our sin from us.