

LESSON 5

April 4, 2021

Unit II: Prophets of Restoration

Finding Hope in the Midst of Oppression

DEVOTIONAL READING: Philippians 2:1-11

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Isaiah 52:13–53:12; Luke 24:1-35

PRINT PASSAGE: Isaiah 53:4-11a

Key Verse—He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5, KJV)

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He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Identify the connections between the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 52:13–53:12 and the resurrected Christ in Luke 24.
- Affirm the joy of knowing that the Suffering Servant is the resurrected Jesus Christ.
- Share the story of the Suffering Servant, who is the resurrected Jesus Christ.

KEY TERMS

Afflicted (verse 4)—Hebrew: *anah* (aw-naw’): defile; to be bowed down or afflicted.

Servant (verse 11)—Hebrew: *ebed* (eh-bed’): slave; a person who performs duties for others.

Sheep (verse 6)—Hebrew: *tson* (tsone): small cattle; sheep and goats; flock.

Suffering (verse 4)—Hebrew: *makob* (mak-obe): pain; “sorrows” (KJV).

PREPARING THE LESSON

- Refer to the *Townsend Press SS Commentary Teacher’s Edition* for an additional lesson plan—with word studies, insights on teaching adults, learner matrices, etc.
- Review last week’s student assignments (“Your Life” and Your World!”).
- Thoroughly review your student book for your adult or young adult class.
- Please note that you have the option of using your subscription bundle supplements, i.e., Lesson Scenario, Student Activity Sheet, SSL-AAG

WHY THIS LESSON MATTERS

When life is most difficult, we often wonder if there is still hope for the future. Where can we find the promise of joy that will overcome our deepest sorrow? Isaiah 52:13–53:12 reminds us of God’s Servant who suffers profoundly for others, and Luke 24 records the encounter of the Emmaus travelers with the resurrected Jesus.

THE LESSON IN FOCUS

At the end of his second bid for the presidency in July 1988, the Rev. Jesse Jackson gave the closing address to the Democratic National Convention using the slogan “Keep hope alive.” Despite the challenges of life in this country at that time, Jackson challenged the crowd and all who heard him to do all they could to keep hope alive. What is hope, and why is it important in life? Hope is a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen. Biblically, hope has been defined as the confident expectation of what God has promised, and its strength is in His faithfulness. Hope is an optimistic frame of mind based on an expectation or desire. Hope is an important virtue in life because it can motivate us to seek those things that can make life better. More importantly, hope can help make difficult situations and challenges bearable. For believers, hope sustains our faith—our confident trust in our God to do what He has promised. Without hope, life would be purposeless. It is sustained and activated by the strength of the believer’s relationship with God and the level of their confidence in His faithfulness to fulfill His promises. When life delivers trying and oppressive circumstances, God’s people have always been able to renew their hope by recalling God’s great faithfulness in the past. Isaiah records how God balanced the announcement of judgment against Judah with a wonderful promise of future deliverance and restoration. The message was a source of renewed hope for a people facing the oppression of Babylonian exile.

THE LESSON IN CONTEXT

Many have observed a parallel between the chapters of Isaiah and the books of the Bible. Isaiah’s sixty-six chapters can be categorized into two distinct divisions that many compare to the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. The first thirty-nine chapters of Isaiah are devoted to predictions of God’s judgment on His rebellious people, while the final twenty-seven chapters present a message of future hope for His chosen people and all who come to Him by faith. Isaiah identifies the One who will be responsible for coming into the world and bringing this message of hope—the promised Messiah, the Servant of the Lord. In four “Servant Songs” (see Isaiah 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; and 52:13–53:12), Isaiah describes the nature, characteristics, and the ministry of God’s Servant. These “songs” encompassed God’s messages of hope to His people facing present and future oppression.

OPENING INQUIRY

(Choose from the items below.)

1. Why was the Servant’s suffering seen as punishment? (verse 4)
2. The Servant willingly became our substitute, suffering the penalty for sins He did not commit. In what ways can this truth motivate believers? (verse 5)
3. Why was Jesus’ crucifixion a sacrifice and not an example of martyrdom?
4. Isaiah compares God’s people to wandering sheep. What is he saying? (verse 6)
5. Why was the Servant’s humiliating death a victory rather than a defeat?

INSIGHTS

The current political, social, economic, and religious atmosphere of modern culture can lead one to feelings of hopelessness. People are more interested in talking and debating about the issues of the day than they are in actually doing something to improve the lives of everyday people. How can the community of faith assist in keeping hope alive among those who feel oppressed by their

circumstances? Like Isaiah and the other messianic prophets who declared messages of Jesus, the coming Messiah, God has entrusted us with declaring the Good News of the One who gives people hope of abundant life today (see John 10:10) and eternal life for the future. For the saved, this is the motivation to continue to persevere. For the unsaved, it is an invitation to experience a living and sustaining hope, and to gain access to God through faith in His Son, Jesus.

EXPLORATION

The focus of this lesson is finding hope in oppressive or trying circumstances. Emphasize the ways in which the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Christian's present and eternal hope. Provide background for the lesson text and God's purpose through Isaiah. Explore the Suffering Servant passage (see Isaiah 53) and its meaning to the believer. End the lesson by discussing how the students can personally apply the central truth of this lesson, considering the challenges and responsibilities that believers face.

ADDITIONAL EXPOSITORY INSIGHTS FOR THE TEACHER

Commentary on Isaiah 53:4-5

KJV

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our *sorrows*: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and *afflicted*.

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

NIV

4 Surely he took up our pain and bore our *suffering*, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and *afflicted*.

5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Isaiah's prophecy of hope for Israel through the "Servant of the Lord" came at just the right time. Those experiencing persecution often look for a strong military champion to defend their cause. The Servant of whom Isaiah prophesied would bring about deliverance and restoration through His suffering and sacrificial death. This unappreciated and inconspicuous Servant of the Lord would deliver God's people from the penalty and oppression of sin rather than liberating them from their political enemies. God's ways are not our ways. Isaiah describes the Servant's suffering through the eyes of Israelites who were presumably exiles in Babylon. Their testimony takes on the tone of astonishment as they realize (or would realize) that the Servant bore the consequences of their sin (verse 4a). The reference to "infirmities" refers to spiritual illnesses, not physical ones. Although the Servant's ministry would include healing physical sicknesses and disease, His greater work was healing spiritual infirmities. Through His substitutionary death, the Servant took on Himself all the sins of the nation and the corresponding grief that sin causes. Many mistakenly assumed that the Suffering Servant had received just punishment for the sin of blasphemy against God (verse 4b). The Servant's substitutionary suffering involved being pierced (wounded) and crushed (bruised) for the rebellion (transgression) and sins (iniquities) of the people (verse 5). The scourging (stripes) inflicted by the Romans was horrific beyond description. Yet, the Servant

willingly endured the scourging to secure the inner peace of those who would come to Him for salvation. The suffering and death of the Servant were necessary because they satisfied God's wrath against sin. For those to whom Isaiah originally spoke, this was a forecast of what would become a reality in the nation's future. For those who have salvation in Him, the result of His suffering is a current reality. Our spiritual wounds were healed by the physical agony Jesus endured at His crucifixion. Jesus, God's Suffering Servant, paid the sin debt in full so that all who come to Him may find peace with God and joy in His presence.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book's related biblical exposition section.)

- **Adult Question:**

How does knowing that Jesus suffered for you affect your level of commitment to Him?

- **Young Adult Question:**

Recall a time when you strayed like sheep from the path of obeying God. Without oversharing, describe how you got back on track.

Commentary on Isaiah 53:6-9

KJV

6 All we like *sheep* have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

NIV

6 We all, like *sheep*, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished.

9 He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

The keys to restoring broken fellowship with God are confession and genuine repentance. The sinner must first acknowledge guilt and that the sin is against God (see Psalm 51:1-4). According to Isaiah 53:6, God laid the iniquity of the sins of the world on Jesus, and allowed Jesus to suffer as if He had actually committed sin (verse 6). Like guilty, gullible sheep, God's people had willingly followed their leaders into idolatry, choosing to follow the way of their own sinful desires instead of following God. A holy God could not continue to allow human iniquity to abide in the presence of His holiness. God's own people deserved punishment and God laid that punishment on the Servant who died in their (our) place. The Servant faced His substitutionary death willingly

and submissively without protest or struggle. His meek spirit has been compared to the quiet disposition of sheep facing the shearer or slaughter (verse 7). After being arrested, bound, and sentenced to death, Jesus faced the humiliation of a cruel public death for the sins of others (verse 8). There are two possible interpretations of the phrase “and who can declare (speak of) His generation (descendants)?” One is that Jesus was cut off in the prime of life, leaving no descendants. Another is that few of those witnessing His death considered it important or bothered to see what was going on. Believers know that because of God’s love for the world, He allowed Jesus to pay the redemption price for sinners who actually deserved to die (see 2 Corinthians 5:21). For the sake of others, the Servant willingly faced extreme humiliation. By His sacrifice, Jesus secured the future hope of rebellious Israel and all who would receive Him by faith. Among the Jews, the death by crucifixion was seen as a curse. Because of their misunderstanding of and contempt for Jesus, His enemies wanted Jesus to suffer (even in death) the indignity of being buried among thieves, but as the Father would have it, Jesus was honorably buried with the “rich” (verse 9; see John 19:38-40). Although Jesus had committed no sin, God allowed Him to be offering for our sin so that we could be made right with God through Him (see 2 Corinthians 5:21). In obedience to the Father’s will, the Servant endured the humiliation of the Cross to pay the penalty for the guilt and shame that belonged to all of us (see Philippians 2:5-8).

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book’s related biblical exposition section.)

- **Adult Question:**

How do you feel when you reflect on Jesus’ intense suffering, humiliation, and death for you?

- **Young Adult Question:**

When, if ever, is it appropriate for a Christian to silently endure undue or undeserved suffering without self-defense or retaliation? Explain.

Commentary on Isaiah 53:10-11

KJV

10 Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

NIV

10 Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.

11 After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

With God, things that may otherwise appear to be a defeat can become an undisputed or certain victory. It was God’s will that the servant would suffer and die as the guilt offering for the sins of the world (verse 10a). Those who rejoiced in the Servant’s death imagined that death marked His end. Yet through death, God made Him prosper. The defeat of His death was swallowed up by the

victory of His glorious resurrection. Because Jesus obeyed God and overcame death, all of God's children may find eternal life through Him (verse 10b; see Philippians 2:9-11). The Servant's once-for-all sacrifice provided complete satisfaction in settling the sin debt (verse 11a). Jesus understood exactly what had to be done to secure the justification of sinners and to declare them righteous (verse 11b). The Servant's triumph over sin and death is the source of hope for all those oppressed sinners and believers experiencing troubling situations. The Servant calls each of us to take up our crosses and follow His selfless, sacrificial ministry of bringing hope to a world victimized by sin.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book's related biblical exposition section.)

- **Adult Question:**

Have you experienced God's turning certain defeat into personal victory for you? Share briefly as time permits.

- **Young Adult Question:**

Can you recall the stories of individuals or groups who are presently suffering even at the risk of death because of their profession of Christian faith? Explain.

LIFE APPLICATION

- **Refer to Adult Book**

(See student lesson's "Your Life" section.)

—Who do you know that is struggling with the challenges of life? Share with them the good news that there is a constant living hope in Jesus. He died to provide access to the power, protection, and presence of God for all who trust in Him.

(See student lesson's "Your World!" section.)

—Our world is troubled with oppression in many forms resulting from sin—persecution, poverty, discrimination, physical abuse, and mental and emotional anguish. Yet, even in the very worst of times, God's people have the assurance of a present hope and help through Jesus, the Messiah, who willingly became God's Suffering Servant and gave His life for the sins of the world.

- **Refer to Young Adult Book**

(See student lesson's "Your Life" section.)

—The message of Easter is real and encouraging:

Christ is risen! He suffered and triumphed over sin and death. The Bible contains affirmations of the joy of knowing that the Suffering Servant is the resurrected Jesus Christ. Proclaim and live the Good News of the resurrection of our Lord.

(See student lesson's "Your World!" section.)

—Two thousand years after Jesus' suffering and death, the world still does not get it. Jesus endured excruciating pain and death for the sins of the whole world. God's love, mercy, and power were beautifully and gloriously displayed at the Cross. We must draw more souls to the Cross by telling the world of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

The lesson topic for Sunday, April 11, 2021, is "Confession and Correction." The Devotional Reading is Ezekiel 18:25-32, the Background Scriptures are Ezra 9–10, and the Printed Text is Ezra 10:1-12.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Lord, Your Son suffered, bled, died, and was resurrected to give us hope in the midst of oppression. Help us to become willing, suffering servants for the benefit of someone who may need hope in these trying times. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

(April 12-18, 2021)

Nehemiah: The Captive Cupbearer Rebuilds a Nation

MONDAY, April 12: "Daniel Intercedes for Jerusalem" (Daniel 9:4-6, 15-19)

TUESDAY, April 13: "Nehemiah Orders Temple Cleansing and Restoration" (Nehemiah 13:4-9)

WEDNESDAY, April 14: "Nehemiah Restores Ministries of Levites, Singers" (Nehemiah 13:10-14)

THURSDAY, April 15: "Nehemiah Reforms Sabbath Observances and Practices" (Nehemiah 13:15-22)

FRIDAY, April 16: "Nehemiah Sets Standards for Jewish Marriages" (Nehemiah 13:23-27)

SATURDAY, April 17: "Nehemiah Sent to Rebuild Jerusalem" (Nehemiah 2:1-10)

SUNDAY, April 18: "Nehemiah Inspires the People to Rebuild" (Nehemiah 2:11-20)