

Jesus shares our suffering and his healing

Message for Sunday, July 28, 2019
by Bruce Fraser

Isaiah 53:2, New Living Translation:
My servant grew up in the Lord's presence like a tender green shoot, sprouting from a root in dry and sterile ground.

Scripture: Isaiah 53:1-9

1) What is it like to suffer?

Ask people to look at the pictures of two people.



Ask "Which one of these is suffering?" (*Accept people's answers. I expect most will indicate the man with no legs. Some may be unwilling to assume things about them. We know nothing about the private lives of these people.*)



Ask "Which one has joy?" (*I expect even more people will resist assuming they know how someone else is feeling inside, especially a complete stranger.*) Clearly, we don't know. We do know that it is possible to feel joy and peace and love, even in the most difficult situation.

That's pretty silly, to think we can know what's going on in someone else's life. So let's talk in our table groups about our own lives. How have you suffered? What was/is it like?

Just a word of caution: let's not make this into a competition, to see who has suffered the most! We don't want to be like the Four Yorkshiremen in the Monty Python sketch! (*We watched the video; you can too:*

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ue7wM0QC5LE.)

2) A word picture of suffering

In the Bible, the prophet Isaiah describes God's servant. This person began life well, like a tender green sprout. However, the soil is dry and barren.

Very soon the hardship begins:

Isaiah 53:3, New Living Translation:

He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with bitterest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way when he went by.

The first thing is the rejection of the people. I think we all know what it's like to be rejected. But what if *everyone* rejected you? What if even your friends abandoned you? That's what happened to Jesus. Many people think this passage tells us about Jesus the suffering Saviour.

After the rejection, the servant suffers. Have you ever heard someone say, "He has only himself to blame" or "He got what he deserved." That's what happened here: the people assume that his suffering is the consequence for his wrongdoing. Look at the underlined sentence below.

Isaiah 53:4-6, Good News Bible:

But he endured the suffering that should have been ours,
the pain that we should have borne.

All the while we thought that his suffering was punishment sent by God.

But because of our sins he was wounded, beaten because of the evil we did.

We are healed by the punishment he suffered, made whole by the blows he received.

All of us were like sheep that were lost, each of us going his own way.

But the Lord made the punishment fall on him, the punishment all of us deserved.

Let's spend some time in our table groups, and talk about this. In particular, talk about these questions. (*I gave them out one at a time, so the conversation wouldn't be chaotic.*)

- What is it like to be rejected?
- What is it like to suffer because of someone else's actions?
- What was it like for Jesus to die on the cross?
- What does it mean to you that Jesus died "for our sins"?

There is a fascinating power when the Bible is read. Many people read this passage, say “Ho hum,” and wonder what’s for lunch. But often when a person who knows firsthand what suffering, rejection and injustice are like reads this—wow!! I have heard reports of this from all over the world—from peasants in the Philippines who have been forced off their land by the wealthy land barons, to indigenous people in Bolivia high in the Andes mountains who attempt to eke out a living from the barren ground.

It’s like they say, “I can identify with the person in that story. This is about me!” There is an immediate bond between them and Jesus.

3) Healing and wholeness

Look again at the passage we read a few minutes ago.

Isaiah 53:5, Good News Bible:

**We are healed by the punishment he suffered,
made whole by the blows he received.**

The good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that, through him, we are restored. We were damaged goods, not worth much to anyone. That’s what sin does to people. It’s like an infection which, left untreated, spreads through the whole person. Sin poisons relationships, breaks hearts, steals our joy, and separates us from God.

All that changes when we receive grace. Because of Jesus, our sin is forgiven. We are washed clean. We are reunited with God. Our joy overflows. God’s love works in us and through us, into our relationships with others. Having received forgiveness, we can pass it on to people who have hurt us.

Watch video *Drenched*. Two men meet at a bus stop. One describes how his life is coming apart; he’s an awful mess. The other smiles, even chuckles as he listens. The first man is appalled at the other enjoying his pain. The second one explains: “I’m not laughing at you. I’m laughing because I *am* you—or I was; I’ve done all that stuff, maybe even worse. But then I met Jesus, and received his love and forgiveness. That’s why I’m full of joy. You can be, too.” [You can see the preview here:

www.sermoncentral.com/church-media-preaching-

[sermons/sermon-video-illustrations/drenched-5476-detail.](http://www.sermoncentral.com/church-media-preaching-sermons/sermon-video-illustrations/drenched-5476-detail.)]

Knowing Jesus even helps with suffering. Not that Jesus will remove our suffering. But he transforms us, so that the pain and hurt no longer control our lives.

The word compassion is a compound word, made from two words: *com* means *with*; *passion* means *feeling* or *suffering*. Jesus has compassion on you. That means that he shares the suffering with you. You are not alone. In fact, going through this may be the way that you experience Jesus’ love for you in a way you never have before. I’ve heard so many people tell me that it was in their darkest hour that Jesus was the closest to them.

Tony Campolo tells a story about being in a church in Oregon where he was asked to pray for a man who had cancer. Tony prayed boldly for the man’s healing. That next week he got a telephone call from the man’s wife. She said, “You prayed for my husband. He had cancer.”

Campolo thought when he heard her use the past tense verb that his cancer had been eradicated. But before he could think much about it she said, “He died.” Campolo felt terrible.

But she continued, “Don’t feel bad. When he came into that church that Sunday he was filled with anger. He knew he was going to be dead in a short period of time, and he hated God. He was 58 years old, and he wanted to see his children and grandchildren grow up. He was angry that this all-powerful God didn’t take away his sickness and heal him. He would lie in bed and curse God. The more his anger grew towards God, the more miserable he was to everybody around him. It was an awful thing to be in his presence.”

But the lady told Campolo, “After you prayed for him, a peace had come over him and a joy had come into him. Tony, the last three days have been the best days of our lives. We’ve sung. We’ve laughed. We’ve read Scripture. We prayed. Oh, they’ve been wonderful days. And I called to thank you for laying your hands on him and praying for healing.”

And then she said something incredibly profound. She said, “He wasn’t cured, but he was healed.”

Knowing Jesus makes all the difference in the world.

Next Steps:

- Pray: confess your sin to God. Confess that you’re not the person God wants you to be. You’re not even the person *you* want you to be.
- Ask for forgiveness. For God’s love. For joy and peace and hope. For healing. For new life. For Jesus to be in your life.
- Share the good news with someone else. It’s too good to keep to yourself!