

The Rock: 04-05-2020**First reading:** Zechariah 9:9-13**Title:** The will of the LORD**Scripture:** Isaiah 53:10-12**Theme:**

The obedience of this mysterious servant to the will of the LORD brought victory over evil itself. Now, as restored image-bearers we are sent into the world to live out and proclaim the story of God.

Introduction:

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah has one of the most vivid descriptions of the Good Friday events recorded anywhere.

Penned some 700 years before the actual events, Isaiah, through the Holy Spirit, sees this mysterious servant suffering the most brutal of punishments.

Unpacking for us a "New Exodus" moment for the people of Israel, through the servant, whom we know today to be Jesus of Nazareth.

Looking through the long lens of history, we can read our Bibles backwards as it were, seeing things clearly as the events for us have long since unfolded.

But for Isaiah and all of his readers, right up to the days of Jesus, this servant was a mystery. A promised one, but a mystery.

There seems to be a hint and an understanding that God, through the pen of Isaiah, was proclaiming and promising a freedom for His people, and ultimately for all of humanity.

Isaiah 51:22 gives a small hint of that as Isaiah began to unpack what was being given to him:

"Thus says your Lord, the Lord, your God who pleads the cause of his people:
'Behold, I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering; the bowl of my wrath you shall drink no more...'"

-Isaiah 51:22 ESV

This verse is important for us because it declares that God is taking away His judgement and wrath, and yet, we learn that it didn't just disappear.

God's wrath had to go somewhere, the evil in this world, and evil itself had to be dealt with.

This rebelliousness of God's image-bearers because of Satan's lie in the garden of Eden, had to be dealt with.

This good news, the Gospel, we begin to see in chapter 52 of Isaiah's writings, and Paul the Apostle pulls that story forward for the Christians in Rome.

Telling them that this Jesus of Nazareth is the very one Isaiah, and all of the Old Testament was pointing to.

But not in the way one would think. Now what do I mean by that?

Well, this story of salvation seems to be flattened out when we say: Adam sinned, God got mad, we are awful sinners in need of saving, Jesus will be the one on whom God will take His anger out on. We are all better now if we accept what Jesus for what he did for us.

In some sense that is not entirely wrong, but it isn't the whole story. There is the clear truth that because God is righteous, His judgement upon Sin (capitol S) has to be brought to bear.

Evil itself, satan the deceiver, (the dark forces at work in this world), the one behind all rebellion against God, has to be disarmed.

In the midst of God doing that, all of our sin (little s) is also dealt with.

But ultimate evil -SIN-that dark force we know as Satan, who has taken many forms,

starting with the serpent in the garden will be disempowered. That is ultimately what Jesus was taking care of on the cross.

Paul understood this to be what happened on that day on the cross -and he explains it to the Christians at Colossae:

"And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him."

-Colossians 2:13-15 ESV

The collision of good and evil on that day was the purposeful design of God in His story of redemption. There is nothing accidental about what happened on Good Friday. And even though the week started out in with a completely different tone, it was headed for a hill called Calvary.

The Story:

The whole story of God is far better, richer and more beautiful than just: Jesus died for me, I accept Him, and now

I get to go to heaven because I'm not bad anymore.

There is so much more than that, and there are hints of it in our text in Isaiah 53:10-12, as well as when Jesus entered Jerusalem.

Palm Sunday is usually all about the Triumphal entry and all that happened that day -but we aren't going to dwell there except to say that even then, Jesus's actions show us that God is doing something big, and so much more than anyone expected.

Under the radar of the Roman governor, this carpenter-king rides down the hill on a donkey:

"Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

"Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and

mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

-Matthew 21:1-9 ESV

Meekness displayed in the face of the "powers that be", he rides down the hill knowing full well the week will end dynamically different than it began.

Why?

"Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief..."

-Isaiah 53:10a

This, to me, is a heart-rending statement, and it would be if it ended right there. Almighty God taking His anger out on His Son so we can somehow survive.

But it doesn't end there, and as we explore these verses, we see hints of

God's overarching purposes -to reverse the curse and put humanity and the world -HIS world back to the way it was always supposed to be:

"When his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

-Isaiah 53:10b ESV

Even though it is God's will to crush Him, even though he is cut off from the land of the living, Isaiah tells us that:

He will see His offspring. His days will actually be extended. How? Through His obedience to God's will as the perfect Israelite, he will prosper.

Because Jesus was the perfect offering, and evil was crushed, humanity was saved. Now, the issue is that it seems clear that a great deal of humanity doesn't want what Jesus has purchased for them.

On the cross, evil brought all it had. Sin itself (not my sins) but Sin itself (satan) had its way.

God Himself was rejected by His creation and idolatry reigned. Satan, the great deceiver, from that first moment in the garden onward through history, would

convince God's image-bearers that they can and should be like God.

And they bought the lie, we still buy the lie. All of that -SIN (the rejecting of God as sovereign) is brought against Jesus, and in His death, it thought it had won.

But you see, where satan thought he was in control, Isaiah tells us, NO -It was God's plan all along.

That death and evil would be defeated itself through the very evil and death it thought brought victory.

Alec Motyer in his commentary on Isaiah says this:

"...the servant bore and discharged the guiltiness of our sin...we strayed as sheep, we returned as sons (and daughters). The servants work I successful in 'bringing many sons to glory'. (Heb 2:12) But because it was done perfectly according to the will of the LORD, it resulted also in His own prolongation of His life." (Rom 4:5)

-TOTC Pg. 382

His perfect obedience to death, makes us right with God. But don't stop there, please! In making us right, he has also

disarmed the forces of evil, and launches us into His world, for His purposes.

Being restored as a healed and forgiven image-bearers means you can and should reflect Jesus into the world through all you say and do.

And in doing that, you reflect back up to God your worship of Him as our loving creator and Father. In other words: He redeemed you for HIS purposes and for HIS world.

Until Jesus comes back, we are His representatives -reflecting out into the world the light of the gospel and the glory and goodness of God.

In these verses in Isaiah 53, it seems clear that the complete obedience of the servant has set things right. That through absolute evil -good emerges victorious.

"Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities."

-Isaiah 53:11 ESV

Through his anguish -satisfaction. By His knowledge -many are made righteous. Because Jesus knew exactly what we

needed, even when we didn't, His obedience as the perfect Israelite, sets us on the right ground before the LORD.

Why? Because He carries our burden.

His sacrifice is all so very purposeful. And it is not just so I can be saved for Heaven. Please don't flatten the Bible out in that way.

Jesus came to save sinners, yes, and along with Paul the Apostle I can say: I am the worst.

But Jesus was dealing with SIN -the evil known as Satan, who is behind ALL the evil in this world, and HE did so once and for ALL TIME.

This deep-seeded notion introduced to humanity in the garden which says: God is not enough. Just bearing His image is not enough. He's somehow holding out; you need to be LIKE HIM. Go ahead, eat the fruit! It's OK!

No, it's not. Jesus saved us from our sins by dealing with the ultimate Sin on the cross. Idolatry and the iniquity it brought with it, through the lie of satan, Jesus crushed it on the cross through the very thing which satan thought brought him victory.

Fulfilling the very first prophetic promise that God would fix our mistake himself:

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

-Genesis 3:15 ESV

Therefore, here is the victory that is ours in Christ:

"Therefore, I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors."

-Isaiah 53:12 ESV

Transgressors are now restored image - bearers. Sons and daughters of the King of the universe, being sent out into His redeemed world to live AND to proclaim this truth:

"That God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

-Acts 2:36b ESV

The week started with Him descending the hill to the roar of the crowd -Palm Sunday!

The week would end with the crowd mocking Him as He was lifted up on another hill in order that all humanity would be drawn to Him...

The vision given to Isaiah some seven hundred years before and written down for our benefit was coming to pass just as it had been written, in accordance with the Scriptures.