

**THE MESSIAH WILL DELIVER YOU****ISAIAH 53:4-6**

Lou Johnson was a World Series hero for the Los Angeles Dodgers back in 1965. In 1971 he lost his championship ring to drug dealers. Substance and alcohol abuse had cost Johnson every memento and keepsake from that magical baseball season – his uniform, his glove, his bat, and that ring. When Bob Graziano, then the president of the Dodgers team, learned that Johnson's ring was about to be auctioned off on the Internet, he immediately wrote out a check for \$3,457 and bought it before any other bids were posted. He did for Lou Johnson what the former Dodgers outfielder had been unable to do for himself. Johnson had been drug free for years and working in the Dodgers front office when this happened. He wept openly when Bob Graziano gave him that World Series ring back. Johnson said, "It felt like a piece of me had been reborn." Isn't it great to hear stories about someone doing something really kind, loving, and wonderful for somebody else?

There's a far greater and more wonderful story of love and self-sacrifice that's our focus this morning. It's the story of Jesus dying on the cross for you and me. Oddly enough, however, we're not going to read about it in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John which were written after the event actually occurred. Instead, we're going to read about it in the book of Isaiah which was written some 700 years before Jesus was even born. God revealed to the prophet Isaiah that one day He was going to send a very special deliverer into the world to save not only Jewish people, but people all over the world. This deliverer was the Messiah – a title that's very close in its meaning to a more familiar title – "Christ." Jesus the Christ is Jesus the Messiah. This message is found in Isaiah 52 and 53. Now, I've been calling this series of messages "A Portrait Of Jesus Before He Came." No, it's not a literal portrait of what Jesus looked like. Instead, it's a description of what Jesus did and why. Today, we want to focus on 53:4-6. God was sending a future deliverer who was going to do something very unique for all of us. He was going to die in our place. This passage assumes every one of us needs to be saved or delivered. But delivered from what? And delivered by what?

**YOU NEED TO BE DELIVERED FROM GOD.**

Does that sound strange to you? Why do you need to be delivered from God? Isn't He a God of love, of compassion, and of kindness? Doesn't God want to forgive your sins and make Heaven available to you? Look again at the Scripture we just read. Who pierced and crushed this Messiah according to Isaiah? God Himself did. "All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all." (Is. 63:6 NLT) By the way, that phrase "laid on" doesn't mean to give something to someone else gently. Instead, it means to hit someone with great force. A bit later in this same chapter, we read, "But it was the Lord's good plan to crush him and cause him grief." (Is. 53:10 NLT) That word "crush" communicates better the true sense of what happened at the cross. Now, I admit it. It's very hard to

get your head around the fact that God caused His Son, Jesus, to suffer. But that's exactly what Isaiah said here. It's unavoidable.

Sin is very serious to God. Fools often mock the seriousness of human sin. That's one reason they're fools! And we tend to minimize or excuse sin, too. But God can't overlook your sin or mine. It's impossible for us to view sin the way God sees it. He sees it in all of its badness and blackness. I recall hearing about a young boy who was enjoying a swimming pool with his cousins. The pool featured a pretty imposing high diving platform. This boy's cousins dared him to jump off that high dive. From the ground looking up, it didn't look so bad. So, up the ladder he climbed and out the edge of the platform he walked. But when he looked down, that boy almost had a heart attack then and there! From that perspective, it looked like a very long drop to the surface of the water. Very humiliated, that young boy climbed back down the ladder. How it looked from below was very different than how it looked from above. Likewise, our sin looks very different on our level than it looks to God on His level.

God is an absolutely holy, righteous, sin-free Being. Yes, He does indeed love sinful people like you and me, but He hates sin beyond anything we can imagine. The Bible tells us that God's eternal and consistent attitude towards any and all sin is anger – a holy anger, a terrible anger, and a justified anger. Fortunately, God doesn't get angry like you and me. Our anger is usually selfish, prideful, and malicious. God's anger is clean, good, and right. It's anger at the right things for the right reasons. His anger is like the anger of a judge who pronounces a sentence on a criminal. God's anger is actually proof of His goodness. If God wasn't angry at sin or if He refused to punish sin, He couldn't really be just. An unjust God would not be a good God. God's anger demands a resolution. He doesn't just cool down eventually and get over it. His anger doesn't fade away with time. God never looks down from Heaven, shrugs His shoulders, sighs helplessly, and says, "Oh, well, those people down there just can't help being bad, can they? I guess I'll just have to forgive them anyway."

In OT times – long before Jesus was born – God instructed the Jewish people to make animal sacrifices a part of their faith. The people were taught the violent death of an animal offered up in sacrifice was necessary to turn away God's anger against their own sin. A perfect animal like a lamb or an ox was brought before the priest. He laid his hands on the creature's head in a solemn act of identification and substitution. The animal was then killed in place of the person who brought the animal. What was the meaning behind that act? First, my good deeds never cancel out my sinful deeds. A penalty must still be paid for my sin. Second, from God's perspective my sins deserve a severe penalty: death. Three, because God loves me, He is willing to provide and accept a substitute for me so I don't have to die for my own sins. The entire OT system of worship was designed to prepare the Jewish people for what God was going to do in and through Jesus on the cross finally and forever. Frequent animal sacrifice pointed to the once and forever sacrifice of Jesus.

Here's what we must remember. God doesn't ask you or me to help Him resolve His anger over our sin. That could only happen by sending us to Hell for all eternity. Instead, God resolved His own justified anger over our sin by unleashing it upon Himself in the person of His own Son, Jesus, on the cross. Was Jesus, then, in some way His Father's victim? No, not at all. Jesus was never an unwilling victim. He freely chose the cross. He knew it was His destiny – the plan and purpose of His Father before the world was even created. So, there it is. God the Father sent God the Son into this world to deliver us from Himself. An uncomfortable truth, a hard truth, and a difficult truth, to be sure, but it's the absolute truth. If it would have been possible for God to rescue us, to save us, to redeem us in any other way, I can assure you that not one drop of Jesus' blood would ever have been shed.

Here's a question that often gets asked. "What about people who reject Jesus and the deliverance God offers through Him?" It's quite true some people understand perfectly well what God has done for them, and still deliberately reject it. They want nothing to do with God. The idea of submitting to God is repulsive to them. If you insist on dying for your own sins, God will let you do it. If you don't think you need Jesus to be your substitute – it just wasn't necessary for Him to die for you or for your sins – then God will hold you accountable for your own sins. And since God's standard to get into Heaven is absolute perfection, just one unforgiven sin is enough to send you to Hell.

But, I believe far more people simply don't yet understand what God has done for them in and through Jesus. That's where you and I come into the picture. We need to pray their hearts will become open and receptive to the truth. We need to look for ways to build authentic friendships with them in the hope that one day God will give us the opportunity to talk with them about what Jesus did for them and why. People don't automatically know what Jesus has done and why He did it. They need to know – like we now know – that they need deliverance from God Himself. And they need to know God has provided that deliverance through Jesus and how they can access it.

I read about a camp counselor who fell into a deep sleep one night in his cabin. Then, he became dimly aware in the sleepy, shadowy corners of his mind that ants were crawling all over his body. Lots of them. But he didn't want to wake up. He was so tired. All he wanted to do was ignore the problem and continue to sleep. So he denied his dilemma at first. "You ants – you're only a dream. Please be just a dream." He fought the truth for a long time. But, finally, that uncomfortable feeling of being crawled on by little, bitty creatures became unbearable. Just wishing them away was not going to work! So, he jumped out of bed, dashed down to the shower house, and washed those pesky critters down the drain. Afterwards, he marveled over the fact he hadn't been bitten even once by those ants. God's grace works on us like that. We put off repenting and submitting to God because we just don't like the awful truth our sin deserves damnation. Like those crawling ants, we try to deny its reality. And then somehow God breaks through and – in a grace-induced panic - we run to Him for the deliverance we so desperately need. God's love and grace helps us acknowledge

something is terribly wrong with us. He uses those who have already discovered that truth and its solution to help those who haven't figured it out yet. You need to be delivered from God. But here's a second - and a wonderful - truth.

### **YOU NEED TO BE DELIVERED BY GOD.**

Please notice something very significant in v. 4-5 (NLT) Notice how Isaiah uses personal pronouns to underline the truth the Messiah would be your substitute. "Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins. But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed." That might well be the clearest statement in the entire Bible that the guilt of your sins and mine was placed on Jesus.

Now, please notice something else. Those words "pierced" and "crushed" in v. 5 are the strongest words in biblical Hebrew for an excruciating and violent death. Again, 700 years before Jesus was born, Isaiah depicted Jesus' suffering on the cross accurately and graphically. Outwardly, Jesus was indeed pierced, lacerated, and disfigured. Inwardly, Jesus was indeed bruised, crushed, and broken in spirit and mind. The terrible irony of it – and Isaiah predicted this as well – is the fact most of those who actually watched Jesus die assumed He was being crucified for His own sins. But, absolutely not, this was deliverance from God by God Himself. The Messiah died for their sins, your sins, and my sins. It's wrong to think of God as some pouting, irrational hothead sitting on His heavenly throne just waiting to send you to Hell. It's also wrong to think of Jesus having to twist His Father's arm, so to speak, to convince Him to be merciful to you and forgive your sins. From eternity and before creation, Father and Son shared this plan to bring you, me, and countless others into God's forever family.

Let me underline two marvelous results of this deliverance by God. The first one is peace. "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." (Is. 53:5 NIV) That assurance of being OK with God... that knowledge of personal spiritual wholeness... that awareness of why you're here and what matters in the end is pretty elusive stuff in this stressful, anxiety filled world we live in. Why? The deepest cause of a lack of peace is unconfessed sin and unforgiven guilt before God. Until that gets dealt with you can't enjoy peace with God. Now God Himself offers us that peace – peace with God - as a gift. You and I must reach out and take that gift by faith. How? You come just as you are and you receive God's peace as His gift.

A dirty, ragged, homeless boy wanted to be admitted to an orphanage in London. The head of the orphanage said to him, "But I don't know who you are. Who are you? What have you to recommend you to us?" The boy just held up his ragged coat and said, "If you please, sir, I thought these here would be all I need to recommend me." They let the boy into the orphanage. When you and I stand before the door of Heaven seeking

admission, no one will ask you about either your accomplishments or your references. As for me, I might just use the line from that wonderful old hymn, “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.”

Once you make peace with God, then the peace of God can begin to flow into your life. The peace of God is that wonderful sense of God’s love and favor holding you up and surrounding you at all times. You sense God’s presence filling your life each day. You’re aware God’s power is flowing into all of your life’s circumstances – even the unwanted, difficult ones we all face. The Bible says it’s a peace that passes or exceeds our ability to understand it. Followers of Jesus still have times of discouragement, grief, frustration, anxiety, heartbreak, and stress. Experiencing and keeping a hold of the peace of God isn’t automatic. I’ve learned sometimes in my life’s journey I have to pursue the peace of God. Kind of hunt it down intentionally. But here’s the difference. Followers of Jesus don’t have to put up with having our lives dominated by whatever is difficult in life. Because the really big, eternal issues of life have been settled once and for all – our sins are forgiven, we are secure in God’s love, we know where we’re spending eternity – then this life can be increasingly filled with authentic joy and great purpose. When the big stuff has been settled, we don’t have to sweat the small stuff!

Here’s another result of God’s deliverance: love. I know Isaiah didn’t use the word in what we read today, but it’s present in every line of these verses. Aren’t you glad today God’s love for you doesn’t depend on you deserving or earning it? God loves you despite who you are not because of who you are. I know God still has so much more to do in Rick Breusch. There’s still some spiritual sludge in my heart He needs to clean out. There are still some pockets of faithlessness hiding here and there inside of me. But, I know God loves me and He loves you with a passion, a completeness, and a tenacity that’s beyond our understanding. I love how the Bible describes God’s love, “I pray that Christ will live in your hearts by faith and that your life will be strong in love and be built on love. And I pray that you and all God’s holy people will have the power to understand the greatness of Christ’s love – how wide and how long and how high and how deep that love is. Christ’s love is greater than anyone can ever know, but I pray that you will be able to know that love. Then you can be filled with the fullness of God.” (Eph. 3:17-19 NCV)

Auschwitz: Four million Jews died there in World War 2. A half a ton of human hair is still preserved there. The showers that sprayed poison gas still stand there. But for all the ugly memories Auschwitz evokes there is one of unspeakable beauty. It’s the memory one man has of Maximilian Kolbe. In February 1941, Kolbe was imprisoned at Auschwitz. He was a Roman Catholic priest. In that brutal, harsh, hellish place, he continued to follow Jesus faithfully. He shared his food. He gave up his bunk. He prayed for his captors. He was soon given the nickname “The Saint of Auschwitz.” In July of that year, there was an escape. It was the rule at Auschwitz to kill ten prisoners for every one prisoner who escaped. All the prisoners would be gathered in the courtyard and the commandant would randomly select ten names from the roll book.

Then, immediately, those ten prisoners were taken to a cell where they received no food and no water until they died.

So on this particular occasion, the commandant called out the names of the ten prisoners to die due to the escape. When his name was called, each prisoner stepped forward. The tenth name called that day was Franciszek Gajowniczek. He began to sob, "My wife and children." But then another prisoner left his row and pushed his way to the front. It was Maximilian Kolbe. There was no fear on his face. No hesitancy in his step. He was ordered to stop or be shot. "I want to talk to the commandant," Kolbe said calmly. Kolbe stopped a few paces from the commandant, removed his hat, and looked the Nazi officer in the eye. "Herr Commandant, I wish to make a request please." For unknown reasons, he wasn't immediately shot or clubbed to death on the spot. He said, "I want to die in the place of this prisoner." He pointed to the sobbing Franciszek Gajowniczek. "I have no wife and children. Besides I am old and not good for anything. He's in better condition than me." Kolbe knew the Nazi mentality only too well. "Who are you?" the officer asked him. "A Catholic priest." The entire prison block was stunned. Even the commandant was momentarily speechless. Then he barked out the order, "Request granted."

On these kinds of occasions, prisoners were not allowed to speak. Franciszek Gajowniczek said later of that moment, "I could only thank him with my eyes. I was stunned and could hardly believe what was going on. The immensity of it. I, the condemned, am to live and someone else willingly and voluntarily offers his for me – a stranger. Is this some dream?" Maximilian Kolbe, the Saint of Auschwitz, outlived the other nine prisoners. In fact, he never died of thirst or starvation. He died only after the camp doctor ended his suffering by injecting phenol into his heart. It was August 14, 1941. Franciszek Gajowniczek survived the Holocaust. He eventually made his way back to his hometown in Poland. He passed away back in 1995, but every year on August 14<sup>th</sup>, he went back to Auschwitz. He went back to say thank you to the man – Maximilian Kolbe - who died in his place.

You and I also had someone willingly and voluntarily die in our place. His name was and is Jesus. The Christ. The Messiah. He delivered you from God. He delivered you by God.