

Absolutely Everything

Isaiah 53:7-9

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Amen. Thank you so much. Emmanuel. The light of the world.

Let's turn to God's word as we hear Isaiah proclaim the suffering servant, and the servant songs of Isaiah pointing—as we hear in the book of Acts—that the suffering servant would be given a name and not just the name of a role. And that name would be Jesus. Because this passage is the passage on which the Ethiopian eunuch was reading when Philip heard. . . The Lord sent him to that chariot where the man was reading the scripture. And beginning with this passage Philip would explain and declare the Gospel. And so when Philip was done the eunuch would say to him: Wait, there's water there. Why can I not be baptized now? And so Philip baptized him. He was brought to Christ through the servant song.

Why is that? It is because the Holy Spirit declared and opened the word that this man saw rich treasures: who God is in this passage. That is my hope and prayer for us this morning, that we would see in this passage that our God gives us absolutely everything.

In the opening verses of Genesis we hear that God created man in his own image, male and female. But in the description of that creation it is particularly that God breaths life—the breath of life into the lungs of Adam, and, of course, Eve. But breathing that breath—the breath that Adam takes and would forever take, the breath that you and I now take while sitting in this room—is not a breath borrowed, but a breath given. God just doesn't give once. He is a God who continually gives. And he gives everything. Everything. That is the Lord that I want you to see from this marvelous passage this morning.

Hear now God's word. Isaiah 53:7-9.

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

⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
and as for his generation, who considered
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people?

⁹ And they made his grave with the wicked
and with the rich man in his death,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth. [ESV]

This is the word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.) Please pray with me. Lord, may you by your Holy Spirit enable our minds to be quieted and our hearts to be opened. Whether we profess faith in Jesus Christ or there are those here who do not, I would ask that by your Holy Spirit alone may you open our eyes to see the majesty, the glory, the beauty of our Savior, the

servant. That we would be a people gripped with thankfulness, filled with joy, and coming forth with praise: How great is our God who is given us absolutely everything. Help us, we pray, and help the teacher. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

So in this passage you will see in your outline there is **Quiet Affliction**, he is **Cut Off**, yet he was **Innocent**. And in these three points, the continual theme that I want you to see again and again—may the Lord repeat it in your minds: Look what he has given. Look what he has given. Absolutely everything, because of the servant's quiet affliction, because the servant was cut off, even though he was innocent.

Last week when we were together we looked at how Christ, and the servant which Isaiah was proclaiming, was the substitutionary atonement for God's people and for all who follow him. It is the statement that Christ, the servant proclaimed here, would be the one who would give of himself as the offering and sacrifice to remove from us the stain and guilt of sin, but make us children of God. This week as we look together we see that not only was he just a substitutionary atonement, but what made it so complete, what made it so everything.

Let's look together. **Quiet Affliction**. In the opening verse, verse 7, it says, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth." And then he gives the illustration of these two animals. Now envisioned here, Isaiah is not proclaiming how the servant is like the Lamb of God, in other words, the one who was slain. But literally he's drawing out the analogy here, that what animals do when they are led away—whether it is to be sheared or even to slaughter—they are not conscious of what is about to happen to them. And so they are led by a hand that they know, and they willingly go. So one of the aspects that is being spoken of here is the willingness of the suffering servant. And the first willingness is a willing silence.

As he says here, "so he opened not his mouth." The way in which it is translated into English is to give a pronounced accent on the reality that Christ (or the servant) could proclaim, he could speak. Because unlike an animal, he is a human being who has the understanding and the ability to see and to anticipate what is about to happen. And as we've seen in the verses prior, he knew particularly what was about to happen: that his suffering was imminent. Yet he chose willingly not to open his mouth.

I don't know what your, like one of your recurring nightmares, but one of mine is to. . . Now it doesn't happen all that often, but it happens, so I'm going to let you in just a little bit. So the idea of being falsely accused and not able—as someone who likes many words—not able to say anything in one's defense. So to be innocent of that which is charged, [but] not able to speak. Now go one step further. What I cannot imagine is being innocent of that which is charged but choose not to defend oneself. That, ladies and gentlemen, is beyond my comprehension. Which is why I need to sit in these verses. Which is why we need to hear them again and again. That his silence was a willing silence.

But not just a willing silence, this verse also declares to us a willing submissiveness. We see it in this word *afflicted*. In this word *afflicted*, as it is used in this passage, [it] has a reflexive element to it in its use in Hebrew. What does that mean? It means that it is a submissiveness that he was...that he took on himself. Literally translated: He kept himself in a state of submissiveness. That his will, his motivations, his desires, even, were set on giving himself over to the suffering

that he was about to experience.

Why is this important? Because as human beings we can understand the desire to not submit to that kind of suffering. We resist it. We fight against it. Why is it then important for the Scriptures to declare that this servant—which Philip would declare as the Christ—why would he willingly give himself over to submissiveness, and why is that important. It is because of a passage that precedes Isaiah. It comes from the Book of Leviticus. It's Leviticus Chapter 16. In Leviticus Chapter 16 we hear of the Day of Atonement once a year for the people of God in Israel. And on this Day of Atonement they were to bring sacrifices as an offering for their sins that they had committed in the year. So they would give over the sacrifices to the high priest. The high priest was instructed by God's Word and God's law given in Leviticus exactly what they were to do with these sacrifices.

One of the elements of the Day of Atonement involved two goats. One goat was given as a sin offering on the altar. And so, as was customary with the sin offering, the high priest would lay his hands on the sacrifice, confessing the sins of the people—only after he'd offer a sacrifice for himself. But in this case, once he moved to the offering for the people he would lay on his hands and he would confess the sins of the people, offer the sin offering on the altar. But on the Day of Atonement there was to be a second goat. Now the first goat was to be offered as a sin offering to Jehovah, to the Lord. Because why? Because the people of God in Israel were in relationship with God. "I will be your God and you will be my people." And so whom had they sinned against? The Lord Jehovah. So the sin offering was offered as sacrifice for forgiveness to the Lord. But this second goat—you go and read in Leviticus 16—it says the second goat was not to be sacrificed on the altar. But the high priest was to lay his hands on the head of the goat, confess the sins of the people of God, and set it free. To cut it off from the land of the living, to set it free into the wilderness to Azazel, which was known as the father of evil, the father of evil spirits.

Now to set off a goat in the wilderness was to send it to its utter, definite death. And so you have first the goat which is offered as a sin offering to the Lord, but why then is a goat set free—and it says—to Azazel. Because when people sin against the Lord—they are in relationship to him, so they have sinned against him. But in their sin, in their willful, rebelliousness, they have [also] put themselves in relationship with the father of evil, with Satan himself. So the two goats are offered. One to bring forgiveness, the other to offer forgiveness and to break the relationship with the one who is the father of evil. And so the sins were laid upon the head of the goat and set free, sending the sins of the people back to the one who is the source of all evil. Do you get the comparison?

So here, what is interesting is that this suffering servant is better than an animal. Why? Because unlike an animal, he consciously knows exactly what he's doing. He isn't just two goats, he is one offering. Offering to the Lord who has received, who has taken upon [himself] the iniquity of us all, and receives the wrath that is due to the evil one, even to us, himself but stands as our substitution. It is utterly complete. And by so doing we are reconciled, through that sacrifice, to God himself.

Why is this, of course, necessary? Because of this reality. As one commentator says it this way, and I could not say it better myself. What you have is that this complete deliverance from sin—and its author—was symbolized in the leading away of the goat, which had been laden with

sins, into the desert. The goat was to take back the sins, which God had forgiven his congregation, into the desert to the father of all sin, into the one hand, as proof that his evil influences upon men would be no avail for those who had committed them. In other words, this biblical word of *expiation*, the suffering servant willingly gave of himself quietly so that, therefore, our sin is removed completely. This is the declaration of what the willingness of the servant did. What he did was absolutely everything for us.

But the passage continues in verse 8, “that he was cut off from the land of the living.” Now you'll notice in verse 8 it says, “by oppression and judgment he was taken away.” What that literally means is by restraint and by a legal case brought against him. That's what the word *judgment* means there. In other words, he was led away as a common criminal. Even though the accusations were false, they still put him through a legal case. That's what the word *judgment* means. It sort of has different flavors, but always relates in some degree to those who are facing some sort of case against. And so one of the ways that he was cut off is that though he was innocent, he had to suffer the injustice and the unjust nature of false accusation and a trumped up trial. This is why he had to be taken away.

But what of his contemporaries? Not only was he cut off and falsely accused, it says that of his generation who considered him, that he was “cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people.” Now what's interesting is Isaiah switches the voice here. He's no longer talking in the third person. He's now saying this is what happened to him for my people, the ones to whom Isaiah is proclaiming this prophecy. So he was cut off first because of a legal case, and then he was sent out of the land because of the sins of my people—Isaiah is declaring. This is the wonder of the willingness of the suffering servant. That he would serve as a sin offering, to be accused of sins which he was not guilty of, to face a judgment which was false. Yet he gave himself, and he was cut off by those who should have embraced him. They said, ‘Away from us.’

Why is this important? It is because of these words. Think of this. If sin was merely failure, then what we deserved would be pity. Just a mistake. If sin was merely a moral defect, then we should never be blamed for doing anything wrong, because we couldn't help it. But if sin is willful rebellion, willful rebellion, then that can only be matched, that can only be covered, that can only be taken away because another person willingly, though innocently, was willing to be charged in our place. Consider this. Only a consenting will can substitute for a rebellious will. But sin isn't just failure. It isn't just a moral defect. It is sin because we do what we want to do.

And yet God in his grace has given us his love, has given us everything in giving a servant, who would be charged with what we are guilty of, yet he was innocent. To be cut off, and yet we, because of Christ, are welcomed in. What salvation! What a salvation. Deserving rejection, because of this servant we are called friends. And the Lord sets his love over us, because he set his wrath over the servant. What a gift.

(I forgot to start my timer, so I have no idea how long...I'm going to look at this clock here. All right. We've got plenty of time. We're going to rock here.)

So we have quiet affliction. He was cut off. But he was **Innocent**. Verse 9. “And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.” Wow. How was he innocent? It lays it out for us. He was

innocent because of the actions performed. None of Christ's, none of the servant's actions involved violence. He says there was "no violence." That gets to the servant's outward actions that he performed. And looking—as Philip would declare—look at Christ. Look what he is doing. At the point when violence was most due, he chose not.

So what's interesting, verse 9 kind of circles back to verse 7. That though he could have objected to the violence, he could have rained down power and glory. But that was not the will of the father. No, he chose no violence, and in fact healed those who did not deserve healing. Showed grace to those who mistreated him. And on the cross he would say, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." They know not why they are doing and to whom they are doing the violence. But I will receive it. This is the beauty of innocence, but it is not ultimately the purity of innocence of the suffering servant, until we see what is next.

To merely say his actions portrayed no violence, that's one thing. But let's go one step further. Verse 9 does. "And there was no deceit in his mouth." The scriptures are clear: Out of the mouth the heart speaks. Even James would declare a person who can keep their mouth from speaking sin or violence is able to keep their whole life in check. Why? Because we recognize that where actions in words come from is the deep place of motivation and will. It is from the heart and the mind of the heart. And it says there was no deceit in his mouth. That's not talking about outward actions; that's talking about inward character.

Because there are many who would still want to bargain with God for the first point. 'I've not done violence towards others. I've not taken anyone's life. I've not participated in that. I've done justice. I've protected others.' But that is not what makes us righteous before God. Because it's not our outward actions, it's also our inward motivations. And who, O Lord, can stand, if all of our motivations and desires were on display. Lord, have mercy. But here we read of the servant who had no violence and no deceit, and you see the purity of his innocence. Yet they gave him a grave. They gave him a grave that was due us.

What do you think of this God who's given everything? It's God who has given us everything. Not just breath every single moment, but has given us that which we cannot fully comprehend, if we try to reduce it to a logic. Because it busts out all logic, it busts out all definitions of love. A God who has given us his Son as a servant, to give us everything for life and salvation. How do you receive this gift? What will you do with this?

One of the authors that I read frequently, in thinking about the gifts of God, says this. Most of us don't quite get (he has that in quotes)—we don't quite get the extent of God's gift giving. Even though we grasp it intellectually, we live more or less like characters in novels who think of themselves as citizens and responsible people, family men and women who obey the law and try to do what is right. Who think, most of the time, that we have sort of reached our middle class lives by our own hands. We can depend on ourselves. We want to do what is right. And then he quotes a character from Michael Malone's book, *Handling Sin*. He says of this man Michael Malone—or rather he says of this character Raleigh Hayes, that through a series of unlikely events he had been shaken to the awareness that he had been given grace for no earthly reason. Like a surprise present. Everything, absolutely everything, he thought he earned, sustained by his own will, and deserved, he realized now that to believe that God has given us absolutely everything is to know what it means that our God is a creator, that our God is at his heart a giver. Everything we have, every thread of clothing, every breath, every ounce

of life has been given to us by God. More than that, he has given us a salvation, when what we wanted was rebellion. For the servant came to give of himself absolutely everything that we might receive salvation.

If you do not know him, believe in him today. He knows you to the bottom. He knows you inside and out. He has created you. He knows your sin. He knows your self-dependence. He knows your rebellion. Yet he still says to you, "Come unto me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Receive him today.

Let's pray. Lord, you have given us absolutely everything, even while we are often deceived to believe that we provide for ourselves. You, O Lord, remind us again and again that all we have is gift. But the greatest gift is the gift of your suffering servant, our Savior Jesus Christ. Help us to receive it. And by your Holy Spirit help us to have a greater grasp of the treasure that is ours in Christ Jesus. And for those who believe this morning, I pray, help us to rejoice. To rejoice, to be a people of singing and joy, of thanksgiving. And of those who do not know you, I pray that today would be a day of new joy—the joy of knowing you today, as a God who gives us everything. We give you thanks and praise. Now work in us this grace. In Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen.