

Genesis 1

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 March 2006

Preacher: Donald Macleod

[0 : 00] And the words, the opening words of verse 13, see my servant, behold my servant.

Amen.

One, that we all love the word of God and long to understand it. Two, that we love the Lord Jesus and love to hear about him.

And three, that we are so indebted to him as our suffering saviour. I've longed to know more and more about those sufferings of the cost of our salvation.

I longed to know more about his sufferings and the cost of our salvation.

[1 : 53] And I want to turn this morning to this well-known passage. The passage which is one of Isaiah's great servant songs.

This messianic figure, the servant of the Lord. Anointed by God's spirit.

Taught by God. And now before us in this prophecy is the one who is distinguished above all by the extent and greatness of his suffering.

And I want to move rapidly through some of the movements of this chapter to bring out some of its great emphases.

First of all, the perception people had on the servant of the Lord. You see that from verse 2 downwards.

[2 : 58] He grew up before him like a tender shoot. Like a root out of dry ground. You would imagine here was somebody that people would find so charismatic.

And so attractive and so fascinating. Because we know that he was God's eternal and God's pre-existent son.

And he was embodying all the qualities of God himself and all the glory of God's love and God's beneficent power. And yet they look.

And what do they see? They see nothing worth a moment's consideration. As to his origin they say, a root out of a dry ground.

A root growing in a desert. Somebody of earthly origin. Somebody of very low and obscure earthly origin.

[4 : 09] That's all they see. Somebody utterly earthly. Utterly ordinary. And they see in terms of the sociology.

And they say then, he is despised and rejected by men. Nobody thinks anything of him.

There is no celebrity. No great important people following. Until then again grounds for dismissal.

And then they think of his temperament. A man of sorrows. Unacquainted with grief. Not some great effervescent.

Unacquainted with grief. And of course, not somebody who simply enthuses. Unbubbles over. But somebody who has grief and sorrow.

[5 : 13] Etched on his face. Someone so grave. In his demeanor. As if he were carrying some tremendous burden.

as indeed he was. Some were exuding such a solemnity. And that too they found off-putting.

So, in origin earthly, in social status of no consequence, in temperament quite unremarkable and uncharismatic, others say at last he has no beauty or majesty to attract us to.

They found in him nothing at all that drew them to him. No beauty that we should desire him.

And if you stand back from it, how remarkable was the veil drawn over the glory of Jesus.

[6 : 27] Paul in Philippians 2 speaks of his making himself nothing. And how successful he was in that.

He was God's son, God's only son. He had made the world. He was upholding the world. He had come on this great redemptive mission. And yet his identity and his eminence were both obscured under the veil of his human ordinariness.

And people saw no beauty at all in him. And we have to say from that that today we have moved to opposition.

where we see something shall I say magnetic and compelling in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's only because God himself by his grace has changed us in the core of our being. Given us new criteria, new perceptions, given us almost a whole new aesthetic so that we see beauty where the world sees no beauty.

[7 : 55] And if you are one of those who are sometimes tempted to doubt your own love for the Lord Jesus, one of those who sometimes lacks assurance, lack assurance of their own salvation, then is this not the great acid test?

What do you think of Christ? It's not what you think of yourself, your own conversion, or your own growth and grace, or your own marks of grace.

But I tell you this, unless God has changed you, you see nothing attractive in Christ. And if you see something attractive, if you want to, then it's because God has given you a new heart, a new eyes, a new criteria, this whole new aesthetic.

I come back time and again to those words, Odom Gufferis, who said, faith means looking at Christ and saying, less would not satisfy, more could not be desired.

And you today may be so profoundly dissatisfied with everything about yourself, your own spirituality, your own conversion, spiritual progress, what people call your prayer life, all these things will drive you into the vortex of repentance, not the vortex of despair.

[9 : 46] But, do you think Christ is great? Do you think we have a great high priest? Do you know what Thomas Boston meant when he said looking at the covenant of grace?

There is nothing in that I would want out. And there is nothing out that I would want in. This is all my salvation, this is all my desire.

Faith means absolute, unsatisfaction Jesus, Jesus, it means enthralling with Jesus, it means saying, I don't know if I have him, but I know that if I had him, I would have all that my soul needs.

Here is the natural human being, looking at Christ and saying, well, so what? What's all the fuss about? A root out of a dry ground, no form, no comeliness.

And then the believer says, can you be serious? And we're looking at the same thing, at the same person, at the same man, this enthralling, this fascinating, captivating, magnetic Christ, that's what I see.

[11 : 08] So, here first of all, this problem of our human perception of the Lord, this complete veiling. And you know to do the show that today, the church itself, too, has to walk the same road as the Lord Jesus.

We, too, have to live as a community that has no form or comeliness and no beauty that the world could desire us.

And people look at the church and say, you call these the people of God? You call these people saints? you say, these people, how spiritual power? And even the temptation for us is to try and take away the veil and show, oh yes, we are great people.

We are. Very gifted we are. Very clever we are. Very entertaining, very amusing, this, that, or the other. and we have to hold absolutely to the veil that God has thrown over our own special status and relationship with him.

Because we cannot be other than our master. And we can't pretend to a form or a beauty that he could not pretend to.

[12 : 32] and we have no right to change our own image, to accommodate to the criteria of this world.

But we have to walk straight along the path of the crucified Son of God, this one who lived incognito as God's Son, this one whose glory was failed.

John says in his first epistle in chapter three, Behold what manner of love that we should be called the children of God.

And such we are. But the world doesn't know us. Time and again, Christ was tempted to draw away the veil and show people how glorious and magnificent he was.

But he never did so. The devil said time and again, tell them who you are. Show them your glory. Do some great worldly thing. The church must always resist that temptation.

[13 : 40] It must walk the road of the canonic self-emptying, self-denying, veiled Christ who is incognito the Son of God.

And in the same way the church is incognito the people of God and its normal standing in the world is despised and rejected by men.

That is its normal position, that is the normal perception of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. And then we have the explanation for the suffering of the Lord Jesus.

We have that more or less down from verse 4. The sufferings themselves itemized in great detail so many species of suffering.

He is there before us as somebody who is pierced and he is crushed and he is wounded and he is despised and rejected and he is a man of sorrows and of grief.

[14 : 56] There are all those physical sufferings and there are all those social sufferings and there are all those inward mental sufferings the grief that he had to bear and there is a spiritual suffering this man who was rejected by God and you see people looked at him at this Messiah and they did their own conclusions why was he suffering and they said he was suffering because he was stricken smitten by God and afflicted and they were saying it's because he is a wicked man and he is suffering the just recompense of a wicked man he must be somebody very very bad for they nailed him to the cross of Calvary and I'm sure that mothers warned their little boys and girls and said to them that's what will happen to you if you don't behave you'll end up in that kind of trouble these sufferings they were so appalling why was he suffering so much because

God was against him and you know there is such great truth in that paradox because in a way God was against him and Isaiah is very plain about that it pleased the Lord to bruise he has put him to grief the mystery of Calvary is not the love that sent Christ to the cross that is a great depth that was great love but it's not the mystery the mystery is why did God the father do it why did he give his own son why in his great plan for the universe in that great decree of ordination of ordination what whatsoever comes to pass why did he then choose to create little creatures like you and me with free will who would use that free will to sin and as a consequence of that free will and that sin God would need to send his own son to the cross why did he not spare him why did he deliver him up why give him why did the Lord bruise his own son the mystery of the cross it's not the action of the Pharisees or the action of Judas or the action of the coward disciples is not even the action of Jesus Christ himself it's the action of God the presiding priest at this most unlikely of all altars in this most appalling of all temples that there

God offered his own son why 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 it is sublime picture one of those rare moments when natural human talent is called into the service of the purest gospel of the Lord of glory you can almost hear handers Messiah and his magnificent formulation of all these emphases he was pierced for our transgressions the why of Calvary why did God do it and the answer of Calvary for our transgressions in my place condemned he stood the Lord has laid on him the equities of us all can you wake him up sometimes and think of all those indefensible moments in your own life the shame the pain they've caused and where do you find relief shall they cause ripples into eternity and weep you again at the judgment day or shall they fester until your conscience and your soul turn septic or shall we stand in that only place where sinners can stand sinners plunge beneath this flood lose all their guilty states in my place he loved me

[21 : 33] Paul says and gave himself for me were you there when they crucified my lord or shall we go today with all the guilt of her past and the inevitable guilt of her future and laid all of the foot of the cross and say please lord will you take this one too do you think you could take another he was crushed for all iniquities and then you see the demeanor of the savior so remarkable verse seven 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 her shearers is dumb so he did not open his mouth there are magnificent and there are terrible images here there are images which are almost unbearable the lord Jesus the lamb waiting for the shearer standing there amid all the heartless barbarism of the shearing shed waiting to be shorn and he doesn't open his mouth well

I could live with that and not be tormented by the image then it changes and I'm no longer in the shearing shed but in the abattoir and that's when you shudder he has led like a lamb to the

slaughter the apostle John in the revelation caught up the same image a lamb standing in the center of the throne having been slain or in the intolerable image again with its throat cut heart it's fine if you can turn the cross into an item of personal jewelry and I have no objection to that unless it obscures from you the fact that the

Lord was not crucified on a piece of jewelry but on a cross on the garbage heap this is more abattoir than crucifix and the meekness of it and although I don't want to reduce the message to one of pure exemplarism the example of Jesus yet is it not example and I am saying to myself and yourself how the complaints fly out of us how we are not silent how it cannot be said that we don't open our mouths and how surprised we seem to be when as followers of the

Lord Jesus Christ we suddenly discover that there is a cost to discipleship and we bleat and bleat and bleat like no sheep ever bleated we bleat the Lord Jesus took the cup which the Father gave and he shuddered and he recoiled and everything in him said please Lord not that not the black hole for you won't be there not that and then he said not my will but yours be done and then he said rise let's go rise let's go can't go back only forward rise let's go and don't forget the abattoir

I know it's not nice Calvary wasn't nice it was abattoir execution shed that's what love cost and today can we get our own complaints dissatisfactions into perspective by the grace of God God I have learned said the apostle Paul in whatever state I am whatever my circumstances therein or therewith to be content and I want to say a quick word finally on the exaltation of Jesus because in many ways the glory of this chapter is that although it is so focused on the suffering of the servant yet that suffering is set all the time in the context of its exaltation because it begins in verse 19 see my servant will be raised and lifted up and be highly exalted and it ends in the same way

[29 : 33] I will give him a portion among the great and he will divide the spoils for the strong so the suffering is set we can say the jewel of the suffering is set in this context of exaltation before and after now I don't want to go down the road too much but you know the gospels the whole story of Jesus is set between the virgin birth and the empty tomb and you must see the whole story in that context the virgin birth says never forget who this man is on the cross of Calvary that man on the cross is the only begotten son of God and when you sit in the gospel gallery and watch the crucifixion unfold hour by hour and minute by minute in front of you remember the empty tomb it is the cross of the son of

God and it is the cross of our risen saviour and we see the marvelous thing we see that the life of Jesus one great tremendous step from the right hand of God to the manger in Bethlehem and you think well that's the bottom you can't you can't go lower than a manger in Bethlehem and it's downhill all the way from the lower point of the manger to the cross of Calvary and then it bottoms and the moment that he cries it is finished that moment the whole momentum changes and the downward curve it becomes the upward curve of the exaltation his flesh sees no corruption not a bone is broken he is rich in his death in the tomb of

Joseph of Arimathea but you see the thing that really really thrilled the Lord and what was the essence of his exaltation was what we find in verse 10 the will of Jehovah will prosper in his hand God because he had come to do God's will I delight to do your will oh God and people thought well if that's doing the will of God and ending up on a cross what a hopeless failure he was no voice the will of the Lord God's eternal purpose God's plan of salvation God's plan for the world God's plan for a great multitude of redeemed people so numerous and no one can number than

God's plan for a new heaven and a new earth God's plan for an eternal orchestra of redeemed men and glorious angels and vibrant universe that plan has prospered in his hand nailed to the cross of Calvary and maybes almost turn into his father in that moment of expiration did I manage it Abba did I manage it did I do it did I reach yes my son the will of Jehovah prospered in your hand that perhaps was a great terror of the God in Gethsemane that it would all prove too much for very good marriage that his humanity would break under the stream did I make it

Abba yes my son you made it the will of Yahweh was prospered in your hand what again are our plans for our own lives what is our mission statement what is our intended outcome what are our dreams our dreams that the will of the Lord should prosper in our hand may God bless to us this word let's join in prayer oh Lord we ask you to bless us as we reflect on your word and to enable us to take it to heart and to redirect your lives as required by your word to draw from it strength and courage rebuke and admonition as suits our need hold us through this day pardon all our sin for Jesus sake

[35 : 27] Amen We shall close the singing God's praise in Psalm 72 and from verse 17 this is on page 314 the Scottish Salter of the Tunis Effingham His name forever shall endure from verse 17 to the end of Psalm 72 page 314 most verse 17 finally