

"While Men Were Busy"

Isa. 52:14-53:12

INTRODUCTION:

1. What are the one hundred most important historical events?
 - a. Several years ago Grosset and Dunlap asked a group of twenty-eight journalists, educators, and historians to list what they considered to be the one hundred most crucial events in history. In first place was Columbus' discovery of America. Gutenberg's development of moveable type rated second. Some eleven events tied for third place. These events tied for fourth place: "Ether makes surgery painless; the discovery of X-ray; the invention of the airplane by the Wright brothers; the U.S. Constitution taking effect; Jesus Christ is crucified." (Halford E. Luccock, *More Preaching Values in the Epistles of Paul*, New York: Harper & Bros., Vol. 11, page 223.)
 - b. The passage before us indicates that had Isaiah been asked to make such a list, the Savior would have been at the very top. But such a rating requires spiritual awareness and we live in a world that has little time for such thought. We are far too busy.
2. In his picture *Despised and Rejected*, Sigismund Goetze graphically illustrates men's indifference to Christ. The center of the picture is consumed with the Suffering Christ surrounded by men of all kinds. In spite of His tremendous sufferings, Christ seems to be unnoticed by those about Him. The workman has his glass of beer in hand and the political agitator has his motley crowd. The scientist is aware only of his test tubes. The newsboy is busy selling his paper with the latest scandals. The social set are obsessed with their vain frivolities and the military leaders have no interest in a suffering Prince. Even the religious leaders, instead of giving attention to the Suffering Christ, consume themselves with disputes about the text of Scripture. Only a nurse, accustomed to seeing pain and anguish, turns an eye toward the Suffering Savior. In the midst of busy people, Christ is "despised and rejected of men." (James Hastings, ed., *The Great Texts of the Bible*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d., Vol. VI, page 279.)
3. The problem still remains the same: "We have turned every one to his own way" (Isa. 53:6). Oblivious to God's world, men have tried to build their own worlds. Isaiah lifts his voice to those who are too busy and calls them to see what they have overlooked. He reminds us of all that God has done while men were busy with themselves.

I. THE SAVIOR CAME (Isa. 52:14; 53:2).

- A. Inspired of God, Isaiah speaks of the coming of Christ: "His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.... He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isa. 53:14; 53:2).
- B. The ancient rabbis saw in this Scripture the promise of the Messiah. The Targum of

Jonathan and the Talmud of Babylon interpret Isaiah as speaking of the coming Messiah. Only since the Jewish rejection of Christ have their authors refused to see the Messiah in this passage.

- C. At first reading, Isaiah's description of Christ differs greatly with that of the artist Sallman. It is said that Sallman, struggling in an effort to paint the head of Christ, was inspired either in dream or vision and in a moment saw the head of Christ which he then painted. Since that time, it has become world-famous. Isaiah is making no effort to interpret the physical features of Christ. Rather he pictures the inner anguish and suffering that men disdain to see.
- D. With great accuracy, Isaiah predicts the blindness of men. We see in his words a tone of discouragement: "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" (Isa. 53: 1). The "report" of which Isaiah speaks is explained in his following statement in terms of the "arm of the Lord." Isaiah is reporting the Lord's arm at work in the affairs of men. He is saying that God's hand is being revealed to those who will see. Yet he is discouraged because so very few desire to see. It seems that men have always preferred to shun the truth.

II. THE SAVIOR SUFFERED AND DIED (Isa. 53:3-5, 8, 9).

- A. Listen to Isaiah's condensed biography: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. . . . Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:35).
- B. Literally, Isaiah uses words that indicate that it is the men of high places who reject this Christ, and the despise they feel for Him is akin to Esau's attitude in despising his own birthright, of seeing no lasting value in it.
- C. When Christians question their plight and their griefs, they do well to remember that their Savior was well "acquainted with grief." He suffered even the ordinary deprivations of life: "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20). Yet He was not concerned with the luxuries of life which consume most of our planning. Rather, He was consumed with His sole purpose for having come into the world: "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straightened till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:50).
- D. While men were busy with the wheels of business and the revelries of pleasure: "He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death" (Isa. 53:8, 9).
 - 1. There is no way to explain the preciseness of Isaiah's prophecy apart from the inspiration of God. Jesus was taken from Pilate's judgment and forced to bear His cross to the place of execution.
 - 2. There was no one to "declare His generation." This phrase may well speak of the custom of having a crier walk ahead of the condemned criminal,

announcing his crime and calling for anyone who desires to come forward and assert the innocence of the criminal, or speak a good word for him.

- E. The meaning and purpose of His death are simply stated: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5). His chastisement was the price by which our peace was secured. The healing of our sin-torn lives is made possible because of His stripes.

Illus.: Dickens, in his Tale of Two Cities, tells the story of a young nobleman, Charles Darnay, imprisoned during the violence of the French Revolution. Condemned to the guillotine, he faced certain death. However, a man named Carton, because he admired Darnay's wife, visited the cell, drugged Darnay, exchanged clothing with him, and went to the guillotine in his place. This is an illustration of the purpose of Christ's death. He paid our death penalty which we deserve because we have sinned. And when He did it, there were no trumpets, no fanfare, no newspaper headlines to glorify His action. The only attention drawn to His death was that which came from above as the sun was darkened and the earth made to tremble. Men had more important things to think about. They were busy.

III. THE SAVIOR TRIUMPHED (Isa. 53: 10, 11).

- A. Isaiah sees beyond the death of the Messiah to behold His victory: "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. . . . By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. 53:10b, 11).
1. Though the crucifixion would seem to have snuffed out any lineage, Isaiah sees the Savior looking after His offspring.
 2. Through His death He made possible our adoption as children of God. Isaiah sees that, although death is certain for the Savior, beyond death He shall prolong His days.
 3. Although the cross was the greatest tragedy in the human story, it was also the greatest triumph, for it gave way to the resurrection.
- B. Isaiah pictures the triumph of the Savior in terms of a conquering general leading back his procession containing the spoils of victory and the captives of his conquest: "And He shall divide the spoil with the strong" (Isa. 53:12b).
1. Christ defeated sin, death, and Satan. The forces which destroy men became His captives. He calls all men now to share in His victory.
 2. How tragic that men are too busy to hear.

IV. THE SAVIOR OFFERED HEALING (Isa. 53:12).

- A. Men are at once aware of physical malady, because it affects them outwardly. Sin is a hideous, incurable disease that may often go unnoticed, because it affects a man inwardly.
- B. It distorts his reason and perverts his values. Yet men are guilty for having this disease, because it is a willful one. Aware of salvation, men choose to ignore it. Told about the Savior, men tend to shrug off their need of Him. Living in unbelief, men find

them. selves in all sorts of perversions and anxieties. Yet because Christ died for our sins, He can offer us healing for our souls.

- C. What we fail to realize is that Christ's offer of healing remains today but it is for today only. We may not have tomorrow. Because we are busy today, we are tempted to put off all thought of our spiritual sickness until tomorrow, and take a chance that tomorrow will come.

CONCLUSION:

1. David Lockard, missionary in Southern Rhodesia, writes of the death of a little girl named Gela. Though she had been converted, her father was an unbelieving savage. Not knowing how the father would take the death of his daughter, Lockard waited until after the funeral and then spoke tenderly to him about God. Gela's father, with tears in his dark eyes, said: "My little girl used to run errands for me; she was always bringing me things. But today she brought me the greatest gift of all - God!"

2. Don't be too busy for this!

— Author unknown