Isaiah 53:1-12

Apostles Creed - "…suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified…"

<u>The Creed</u> - This morning we are going to look at our next line in the apostles creed: **"Suffered under Pontius Pilate and was crucified"**

- **This is a historical statement –** the man Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph, ***"suffered under Pontius Pilate".***
- **However, in Isaiah 53 we see behind the scenes (or perhaps we should say BEFORE the scenes since it was written hundreds of years before Jesus lived). We see a vivid explanation** as to ***why*** Jesus suffered and was crucified.

<u>Theater stage and behind the scenes</u>: I love going to theater productions. Whenever you go to see a play you always have the actors on stage, you have the story unfolding, and you have curtains that go up and down, lights that turn on and off, special effects that happen on the set. You never see what is going on behind the curtain – if you were to see behind the curtain you would see all that's causing the story to unfold before you.

<u>Historical Narrative</u> – This morning I want to first look at the story, the historical narrative of this Jewish carpenter from Nazareth who was rejected by His own people, suffered under Pontius Pilate, ***and changed the world forever.***

- **The raising of Lazarus – the religious leaders seek to kill Him – John 11:38-57; Mk. 14:1-2; Lk. 22:1-2**

Prior to Jesus' final days in Jerusalem, He was regarded merely as a nuisance, a rogue preacher. But as His fame spread, His following increased and this made the religious leaders very jealous and nervous. The final straw appears to be when Jesus rose Lazarus from the dead. An open and public miracle that caused the religious leaders to go into a frenzy. The Chief Priests and Pharisees could not deny His signs, and they could not refute His teaching – they gathered together and said to one another "if we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation" (Jn. 11:48). From that day on they made plans to put him to death. However, under Rome, the religious leaders were not allowed to carry out capital punishment – so they had to devise a plan to betray him. Also, they feared the people, because many believed in Jesus and were following Him. They paid off one of His disciples, Judas, and set a plot to bring Him on charges before Rome.

- **His triumphal entry – the people praise Him as Messiah – Lk. 19:28-40**

Shortly after this plot began, Jesus entered in to Jerusalem riding on a colt – this was in fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy in Zechariah 9:9. And the people praised Him, laid clothes upon the road, and waved palm branches – which was a sign of respect that would be given to a King entering the city. They were hailing Him to be the Messiah that they waited for. They cried out "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." – quoting Psalm 118 – a Messianic Psalm. The Messiah was the one whom the people were waiting for. In their understanding, He would come as a conquering King and would rescue them from their Roman oppressors. So you can imagine their excitement. However, Jesus did not come to overthrow Rome and to rescue them from their Roman

oppressors, He came to rescue them from sin. So shortly after this grand entrance the people who were now praising Him were crying out, "Crucify Him".

- **Jesus weeps over Jerusalem – Mt. 23:37-39; Luke 19:41-44**

One of the saddest moments in the last days of Jesus is the occasion of Him weeping over the city of Jerusalem, "***O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.***'" The mission of the Messiah was sorely misunderstood. He did not come to conquer Rome, but to conquer sin. The fact that the Messiah would suffer and conquer sin was clearly written in the Tanach (the Hebrew Scriptures)…but they missed it. Even His disciples were confused. Peter on one occasion rebuked the Lord for saying that He would be crucified. Even after His resurrection, Jesus had to set His disciples straight about the Messiah coming to die for sins. "Oh foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe ALL that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:25-26). The prophets indeed speak of the Messiah coming and ruling and reigning…and we still wait for that day, but the first time He comes to conquer our biggest enemy – sin. The very thing that separates us all from God. But the people did not understand this…so they rejected Him as a false Messiah, a blasphemer, and they saw His punishment as proof that God was not with Him.

- **Jesus before Caiaphas and the Council – Mt. 26:36-75; Mk. 14:53-65; Lk. 22:66-71; Jn. 18:12-14, 19-24**

The plan unfolds and Jesus is betrayed by Judas and brought before the religious leaders – The Sanhedrin – the Roman appointed, puppet religious council of their day. They held an unjust proceeding – they sought "false testimony against Jesus that they might put Him to death" (Mt.26:59). During the proceedings, ***Jesus remained silent***. Why! Why wouldn't He defend Himself? Finally, the High Priest asks Jesus straight out if He was the Christ (which means the Messiah), the Son of God. To which Jesus answered, ***"I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."*** A strong Messianic reference by Jesus to Daniel 7:13-14 – "behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. **14** And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed." The Messiah was the coming King after the line of David…the one promised to David whose Kingdom would be established and never end. This was a very clear affirmation of His claim to be the Messiah promised to David and promised in Daniel and many other passages…the religious leaders in a wrathful frenzy were out of their mind. They tore their clothes, they spat on Him, they began to strike Him and mock Him saying to Him "prophecy!". They could not LEGALLY put Him to death, so they delivered Him over to Pontius Pilate who was the Roman governor at the time.

- **Jesus rejected before Pilate – Mt. 27:1-26; Mk. 15:1-15; Lk. 23:1-5; Jn. 18:28-40**

Pontius Pilate could care less about the Jews or their laws. He didn't want to get involved at all…but he did want to keep the peace. In fact, because of his past he was already under the watchful eye of the Emperor. He was disgusted with the post he was assigned to, but he was under a probationary status

and an uprising could cost him his position, or worst his own life. At first he tells the Jews to handle the situation itself, but after learning that their laws demand the death penalty Pilate agrees to adjudicate. The charge that the Jews give to Pilate was that Jesus was "misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is the Christ, a King." (Lk. 23:2)… these claims would be an infraction against Rome. Pilate begins to question Jesus but ***Jesus again does not make a defense for Himself – He remains silent regarding His charges.***

- **Jesus before Herod – 23:6-16**

Pilate, puzzled by all of this, tries to avoid having to deal with it by sending Jesus to King Herod – the Rome appointed puppet King over the region of Galilee. He realized that Jesus was a Galilean which would make Him Herod's problem. Herod questioned Him at some great length…again, ***Jesus gave no defense to Herod***. Frustrated and annoyed, Herod sends Jesus back to Pilate.

- **Jesus mocked and scourged** - **Mt. 27:27-31; Mk. 15:16-20**

In Pilate's headquarters, Jesus was stripped and a scarlet robe was placed on Him. They twisted together a crown of thorns and stuck it upon His head mocking Him, "Hail King of the Jews!" (Mt. 27:29). They spat on Him, took a reed and struck Him on the head.

Pilate delivered Jesus over to Roman scourging. The Greek word that is used to describe the manner of the scourging is from the word flagellum. One of the Roman tools for confession and torture was scourging their prisoners with the flagellum. The flagellum "consisted of a handle, to which several cords or leather thongs were affixed, which were weighted with jagged pieces of bone or metal, to make the blow more painful and effective.[1]" The scourging was intended to rip the flesh from the victim exposing their deeper arteries and nerves. The victim would literally become a bloody mess as his flesh would be stripped from his body. The amount of blows were limited by Roman law to 39 lashes because the treatment was so brutal. The victim would be tied to a post and the scourging was intended to cause a confession on the part of the prisoner which normally would happen very quickly, even if the prisoner was innocent. ***Jesus again, did not confess to any crime…He received the full treatment***.

- **Jesus crucified – Mt. 27:32-44; Mk. 15:21-41; Lk. 23:18-43; Jn. 19:1-37**

After this, Pilate intended to release Jesus because he saw no guilt in Him, but the people were adamant and cried out to Pilate, "Crucify, crucify Him!" (Lk. 23:21). Pilate, afraid of the crowd and of an uprising, finally gave in to their requests. He washed his hands clean of any guilt, and delivered Jesus over to crucifixion.

Crucifixion was a tool used by the Romans as a means of torture, capital punishment, and humiliation. It was intended to send a strong message to their enemies – ***don't mess with Rome.*** The crucified prisoner would be set on display in a public place where all could see. He would often be crucified nakedly in order to increase the shame. The victim would carry their own "patibulum" to the location of the crucifixion. It was the cross beam that would be very heavy for an already tortured prisoner to carry. This was meant to increase the shame and humiliation as people looking on would

[1] Henry E. Dosker, "Scourge, Scourging," ed. James Orr et al., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1915), 2704.

mock and spit and throw things at the victim. Upon arriving at the location of the crucifixion, they would fix the prisoner and his crossbeam to a post using large nails that would be punctured through the wrists and feet. They would then raise the victim up…a public display of torture and humiliation for all to look upon. Jesus was crucified next to two criminals. He was killed alongside criminals and yet Jesus never once pleaded for mercy or confessed to any wrongdoing…or to His own innocence. They hung a sign over His head, to the reluctance of the Jews that read "King of the Jews" as a sign of mockery. Crucifixion was death by asphyxiation – or deprivation of oxygen. The stretched out arms and the hanging body on the pole from nails would make it impossible for the victim to breathe properly…so they would hang on the pole, struggling to breathe, and would inevitably, slowly die. Once the prisoner was dead, they would often pierce the side of the prisoner to ensure that He was really dead…a roman officer who didn't carry out his orders effectively could himself be executed.

Transition - Now…these are the facts, this is the historical record of Jesus who "suffered under Pontius Pilate" and was "crucified". They are not disputed…at least not successfully, and people have tried. This really happened, and ***everyone of us has to give an answer - why***. Why did this happen? A misunderstanding? A wrongful accusation? A sad example of ancient barbaric practices? A crazy man who claimed to be a prophet that was killed for it tragically? Or the Son of God slain for the sins of the world.

What if I were to tell you that the PRIMARY person who caused these events to unfold was God Himself? How would that sit with you?

- Why would GOD cause something so evil happen to someone so innocent and righteous?
- Here's another question we often ask ourselves – "God how could you let THIS (fill in the blank) happen to ME…or to THEM?!

In order to understand why God would CAUSE…not simply allow…CAUSE this to happen…we have to look behind the curtain…and so we turn to Isaiah 53.

Behind the Curtain – ***4 things we'll see: His rejection, His substitution, His Innocence, His vindication***

v.1-3 - His Rejection

"***Who has believed*** what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? **2** For he grew up before him ***like a young plant***, and like ***a root*** out of dry ground; he had ***no form or majesty*** that we should look at him, and ***no beauty that we should desire him***. **3** He was ***despised and rejected by men***, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one ***from whom men hide their faces*** he was ***despised***, and ***we esteemed him not***."

- This prophecy opens with a shocking, astonishing, surprising revelation - ***"Who has believed what he has heard from us"***. Paul and Jesus both quote this verse because the message of the gospel is so hard for many to believe - that the Messiah, the Servant of the Lord, would suffer and be rejected in this way was something that was very hard to believe.
    - He is depicted elsewhere as a conquering King! As defeating His enemies, not falling prey to them. (*for further study – Psalm 2; Psalm 110; Isaiah 9; Revelation 19*)

- Here we see statements of royalty, and statements of lowliness and humility
    - **"root"** and **"young plant"** - reference to royalty.
        - Isaiah 11 – the root of Jesse
        - **"root, branch, shoot"** in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah – kingly terms
        - **"plant"** imagery was commonly used to speak of kings
    - **"dry ground"** – humble and lowly
    - **"No form or majesty that we should look at Him"** – He didn't have the presence or upbringing of a KING
    - **"No beauty that we should desire Him"** – not like King Saul or even King David or Solomon
- ***The point: Jesus did not come as the King that Israel expected…not a conquering brilliant, majestic King. He came from low beginnings, Nazareth, a manger, ordinary and unimpressive – at least EXTERNALLY – He had the power to heal, He spoke with great authority, and the Holy Spirit was Upon Him always…when He walked, He walked on the water. However, He didn't have the appearance they were expecting.***
    - So He was ***"rejected"…*** "***men hid their faces from Him***"… Israel "***esteemed Him not***"

v.4-6 – We see here the WHY - His Substitution

Behind the scenes we realize that the suffering servant, the smitten servant of the Lord, was smitten for you and for me. He was our substitute – He took our place – the punishment He endured was for you and me.

A sacrifice for atonement was not something new to the people of Israel. They understand what it meant for a sacrifice to be offered in their place – for a lamb to be slaughtered for their sin. ***But that the Messiah would suffer this way***, was a mystery to them, though it shouldn't have been…we see it right here!

"Surely he has ***borne our griefs*** and ***carried our sorrows***; yet we esteemed him stricken,

smitten by God, and ***afflicted***.[5] But he *was* ***pierced for our transgressions***; he was ***crushed for our iniquities***; upon him was ***the chastisement that brought us peace***, and ***with his wounds we are healed***. [6] ***All we like sheep have gone astray***; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and ***the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all***."

This is one of the most graphic, detailed descriptions of the crucifixion of Jesus in all of Scripture. It's so easy to see it after looking back on the facts of what happened to Him.

- **Why Jesus was crucified**
    - The Jews considered the crucifixion as God punishing Jesus for His crimes of blasphemy – they ***"esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted"…***what they didn't understand was that God was "smiting" Jesus and "afflicting" Jesus…but not as punishment for HIS sins…as punishment for my sins, and your sins. He took MY punishment as a substitute.
    - ***"God made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us" – 2 Cor. 5:21***
    - He "***bore OUR griefs***"… "***carried OUR sorrows***"

- His "***chastisement*** (or punishment) ***brought US peace***"
  - Peace with God and peace with one another
- He was ***"pierced for our transgressions"***
  - "Pierced" – nails in his wrists and feet…a spear in His side
  - Transgression is a willful disobedience to God's commandments – that's all of us
- "***Crushed for our iniquities"*** – the wickedness within us that we often don't even realize is there. We are far worse than we realize…our motives for doing good AT BEST are self-centered and done without reference to God and His glory.

- **We're like sheep**…we've "***gone astray***" – sheep are stupid, they are defenseless, they can't take care of themselves…they will literally follow other sheep off a cliff to their death – have you ever been there? Following others to your death? I have. (c.f. Romans 3:9-20)
- **Notice it's the LORD that "laid on Him the iniquity of us all"**

v.7-9 - His Innocence

Look at v.7 – "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet ***he opened not his mouth (sound familiar?)***; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so ***he opened not his mouth***.

Do you know why Jesus didn't defend Himself? Do you know why Jesus didn't open His mouth to the Jewish leaders, and to Pilate, and to Herod, and when He was flogged, and when He was crucified and tortured…do you know why He didn't do anything about it…Jesus said He could have called thousands of angels to His side to defend Him…He's the King of the Universe! Do you know why He didn't? He wasn't there on His own behalf…He was there for me, He was there for you!

The punishment of God that I deserved was poured out upon the Son…and His wrath is now no more, for those who have trusted in the Son and His substitution. We are free…we are forgiven…we have peace with God.

v.10-12 - His Vindication

- **"Yet"** – "but wait"…in contrast to what has already been said, this prophecy ends on a glorious note for the suffering servant.
- ***"He shall see His offspring"… "The righteous one, my servant, [shall] make many to be accounted righteous"*** – the one who was cut off from the land of the living (v.8)…cut off from all the blessed inheritance of Israel, all the blessings for a faithful, Torah observant Jew – family, life, blessing. No family for Jesus, no blessing, no life for Jesus…He didn't get to experience the blessed life that many of us live. We take for granted the blessings God gives – but He gave up His life. BUT He will have offspring…more than can be counted! Offspring from every tribe, tongue, and nation! Offspring who are accounted righteous.
  - The book of Isaiah speaks of the nations coming to the light of the Servant of the Lord. Of the salvation of the Lord "reaching to the ends of the earth" (49:6). Of every knee bowing and every tongue swearing allegiance to the Lord (45:23). That all who were incensed against Him shall be ashamed (45:24). That the offspring of Israel shall be

justified [righteous] and shall glory in the Lord (45:25). That the nations shall come in the latter days to Zion to worship God (60:1-11) and there will be a heritage of servants who will find their righteousness from Him (54:17) and eat, drink, rejoice, sing for gladness of heart (65:13-14)

- For all those who have put their faith in Messiah, the suffering servant of the Lord – we are His offspring and we are counted/credited by God as righteous [justified] because of what the suffering servant has done on our behalf.

- ***"out of the anguish of His soul He shall be satisfied" – in the midst of the anguish of what he endured, He would look forward to the glorious results and be satisfied. It was worth it to Him!***

You were worth it to Him…is He worthy of you to trust and follow Him?

- **Hebrews 12:2** – "…for the ***joy that was set before him*** endured the cross, ***despising the shame***, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

The Chosen – Nicodemus and his wife

There is a scene in the movie the Chosen which is a depiction of the life of Jesus. Nicodemus, a religious leader has been asked to follow Jesus, and he is wrestling with the decision to leave everything, leave his life as he knows it, choose a nomadic lifestyle with Jesus and His disciples. He lives a good life, he has a prosperous career, people love him, listen to him, he is the "teacher of Israel"…but he is wrestling with this request to leave it all to follow the man whom he has begun to believe could be the Messiah. His wife is speaking with him and recalling all the wonderful details about their life together (their family, their grandchildren, his career)…she stops and says to him, "Nico…I love our life.", to which he says back trembling, "as do I." He is realizing that to follow Jesus means giving up the life he knows, a good life, and plunging into the unknown.

Jesus gave up his life for us. The call to follow Jesus…it is a plunge into the unknown. We don't know where it will take us, what we will have to give up to follow Him. Most of what He asks us to give up really isn't good for us anyways, but some of those things might even be good things…things that God has given to us. But what we gain in following Him cannot be compared to what we lose. What would the Lord ask for you to leave today in order to follow Him?

Let's pray - Father will you give all of us who are here the grace and the faith and the courage to follow you no matter what we have to give up. Help us to persevere in faith to the end…no matter what we have to lay down at your feet. In Jesus name, amen.