

Isaiah 53:10-12

**Theme:** God loved us first

God is love. God loves us. We love because God loved us first. God's love for you is Jesus suffering and dying in your place. Isaiah wrote, "*Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.*" (**Isaiah 53:10**) Let the fact that it was the LORD's good will, his delight, to crush his own Son and to make his life the restitution for our guilt be large in your thinking! This is the Father's love on full display! The Father loved the rebellious, fallen, sin corrupted, hostile to him and his will people so much that it was his good will to sacrifice his perfectly pleasing Son with whom he'd enjoyed a perfect relationship from eternity for you!

It was the LORD's will to crush him, to cause him to suffer because, as **Psalm 103:10** says, "*He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.*" Our Father has compassion on us. Since paying for even one sin is impossible for us, God placed the entirety of humanity's guilt on the only one who can: his own Son, the perfect sacrifice, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. This was God's plan all along, "*After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.*" (**Isaiah 53:11**) For your salvation, Jesus scorned the shame of the cross, endured it, and sat down at the right hand of God to take satisfaction in a job well done. By his perfect knowledge of and through his perfect ability to carry out God's will, God's righteous servant, Jesus, justified the world. The punishment for our peace is on him. By his wounds we are healed. Only Jesus can endure God's smiting, so he did. Only Jesus can be pierced, crushed, forsaken by his own Father, and endure it, so he did. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter even though he'd done no violence, deceived no one, did not sin ever, but was holy, righteous, and perfect. He had to be so that you, by believing in him, would be perfect, righteous, and holy.

The sacrifice of God's own Son for you is his love for you. Jesus' sacrifice is your life. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross is also *how* you live this life. **Galatians 2:20**, "*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*" Jesus loved ME and gave himself up for ME! That depth of love is not without effect on me! Heaven is opened for me by this, and I'm eagerly looking forward to it! The life I live, the life you live, is defined by Jesus' love and sacrifice so that we can say along with Paul that Christ is living in us and through us. To live by faith in the Son of God who loved us and died for us is, through the power of his Holy Spirit, to live like him. Jesus didn't begrudgingly go to the cross to suffer and die. No. In love, he went willingly to sacrifice. We who by grace have his image restored to us, who are renewed by the Spirit day by day are able to sacrifice willingly.

What's this look like? Depending on the situation, mundane not noticeable. Other times, it shocks and grabs attention. It sure caught the disciples off guard when their Lord, among them as one who serves, tied a towel around his waist to display love by washing their feet! That looked like a sacrifice of dignity to the disciples, it was shocking in the best way.

One time, I ordered a couple coffees and when I pulled around to pick them up, the person thanked me. I said, "What for?!" She said, "Because you said 'please' and 'thank you' and a lot of people don't." I've thought about this over the years because it routinely floors me that we so regularly blank on the little sacrifice it is to our hurried, frenzied existences that we don't consider simple politeness. I say this not to put myself on a pedestal or any such nonsense, many are the times I've not been mindful of kindness. I say this because everyone is craving kindness and love. Take the time for kindness. Make the effort to display love in your interactions and communications. They say you can tell everything you need to know about a person by how they treat service personnel. If we're too busy to sacrifice an overinflated sense of

self-importance that we can't speak politely and respectfully to someone erroneously deemed "beneath" us, well, let's knock that garbage off. No one is beneath us; we are beneath everyone as we imitate Jesus, the willingly Suffering Servant.

Marin Luther said, "In what concerns you and yours, you govern yourself by the gospel and suffer injustice toward yourself as a true Christian; in what concerns the person or property of others, you govern yourself according to love and tolerate no injustice toward your neighbor. The gospel does not forbid this; in fact, in other places it actually demands it." "*Why not rather be wronged?*" Paul said in **I Corinthians 6:7**. Perhaps the sacrifice of a Christian who knows salvation in Jesus' sacrifice is to forego what we're so often told we should never let be infringed: our personal rights.

Paul set all kinds of rights aside for the sake of modeling gospel and so that an obstacle would not be set up by him between someone and the good news. He said he made himself a slave to everyone. Why? To win as many as possible! That means stepping outside of comfort zones, not sweating the small stuff, and making the gospel understandable and accessible so that, by all means, we might help save some. Low hanging fruit alert, this is an anecdotal trope among us: If a guest sits in your seat in church, rejoice you have a guest to welcome instead of asking them to move. More seriously, choose to be all things to all people, choose to be slave to everyone, to sacrifice dignity, personal justice. To allow yourself to be wronged for the sake of the gospel is highly God-pleasing. How do you know? This is what Jesus did and it so met the Father's good pleasure that it earned your salvation! Do the same. You live by faith in the Son of God after all.

Sometimes, sacrifice means service. There are a lot ways to do that here. Being a warm smile as a greeter, pouring a warm beverage, giving someone a ride to church, removing snow in the dark wee hours is very appreciated, not just by my kids and I in the middle of winter, but by God more because when you serve others, you serve Jesus! However, don't think service and willing sacrifice can only happen through volunteerism at church, that's just one piece of the pie. Do things for your neighbor, even the neighbor by whom you're annoyed, who hates you, hates Christianity, hates this church, is a different denomination, a different religion altogether, lives a different lifestyle. That's a sacrifice because first pride and ego have to be sacrificed on the altar of Christ-like humility. You're only able to do that, to willingly in love sacrifice, because God in Christ has sacrifice for and loved you first. Such love does Jesus have for you that he lived up to his own ideals. God's no double talker. "*Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.*" (**John 15:13**) Your ability to live like this is because you live in Jesus and he in you.

All praise, honor, and goodness should be poured onto Jesus because he poured out his life to death. "*Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*" (**Isaiah 53:12**) Because Jesus poured out his own righteous and innocent life to death for our sakes, God has given him the name above all others. Because Jesus was considered the guiltiest of the guilty in our place, we praise and worship Jesus not simply with words, but with our entire lives. Because Jesus lives always to intercede for us, we know the Father's love and have hope for heaven. Amen.