

The Face of Our Salvation

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

13 Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. 14 As many were astonished at you— his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—15 so shall he sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of him, for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand. 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. 4 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. 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; 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. 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 a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. 10 Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

This text is a picture of grotesqueness of Christ's suffering for the sins of the world. In the Roman world, crucifixion was generally reserved for slaves and only the most vile criminals. According to the OT, being affixed to a tree was a sign of a divine curse and therefore the most unlikely place for divine activity.

His entire appearance had been so disfigured by the extremity of the sufferings to which He was subjected that it was almost beyond comprehension how a human being could endure such an excess of misery.

Appalled, sick, and offended at His appearance, many pass by hurling insults at Him, shaking their heads and saying: "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!?" (Matthew 27:39-40)

He had been buffeted, and crowned with thorns, and smitten, and scourged, and crucified, when His face was covered with bruises and with gore, and His frame and features distorted with agony. He was to be thought of as badly mutilated, more than man could bear; it was suffering that borders on the unthinkable.

Thankfully for our sake, Jesus had a longer view as noted in Hebrews 12:2 "Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who 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."

All of that He did for us and the whole world.

Prayer: "What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul! What wondrous love is this, O my soul! What wondrous love is this That caused the Lord of bliss To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul, To bear the dreadful curse for my soul!" Amen. (LSB 543:1) (TLSB)

