

## **Lenten Meditations On Isaiah Chapter 53 Cut Off Without Justice.**

Text: Isa 53:8

Suggested Hymns:

83, 74, 55, 848, 452

1) The Justice Of Man Reached An All-Time Low

2) The Justice Of God Reached An All-Time High

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Isaiah 53:8, ***8 He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today is the Third Sunday in Lent and our third sermon on Isaiah 53. The theme for today is *“Cut off without Justice.”*

Justice for all people, is one of the fundamental goals and ideals of our Australian way of life. Laws are made to this effect: No one shall be deprived of life, freedom, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation.

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a public trial, by an impartial jury; the right to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; the right to be confronted with the witnesses against him; and the right to obtain witnesses in his favour and to have the assistance of Counsel for his defence.

However, this does not mean, of course, that no injustice is ever committed by our legal processes. Human justice has never been, is not now, and never will be a perfect thing — for the simple reason that justice is administered and dispensed by imperfect human beings.

Sometimes people are falsely accused and go to jail. Years later new evidence maybe found, proving their innocence and they are released free to start

a new life. This illustrates an injustice. There would be many such cases that could be found in the legal files of our nation, or any other nation, cases where an injustice was unknowingly committed.

But far worse, of course, are those cases where the injustice is deliberately and maliciously planned, and of all such cases there is one which outreaches by far all the others which have ever been committed. It is the case of Jesus of Nazareth, Prophet of Galilee, the suffering Servant of God fastened by nails to that bitter cross “*on a green hill far away.*” No one who is at all familiar with the facts can possibly deny that Jesus was Cut Off Without Justice. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Cut Off Without Justice**

#### **The Justice Of Man Reached An All-Time Low**

Isaiah puts it this way, *He was taken from prison and from judgment.* Literally translated, that would mean something like this: *From oppression and from judgment He was taken way, that is, hurried off to His death after a sham trial which was a cruel farce and a hollow mockery, a miscarriage of justice from beginning to end.*

Isaiah continues *And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living.* Again, translated more literally: *And among His generation, that is, among those who lived at His time, among those who knew the story of His life, among those who were eyewitnesses of His last sufferings and earwitnesses of His last words, who among them all gave much thought to the fact that He was thus cut off from the land of the living?*

The answer to the question is easy enough: Except for a handful of unimportant people, a few faithful followers and a few devoted women, there was no one who did much thinking, no one who was particularly concerned about that strange figure who died on that Friday’s cross.

As far as the vast majority were concerned, they thought He was what they said He was: a self-styled king of the Jews, a disturber of the peace, a rebel against the authority of Rome.

Surely, then, human justice here reached its all-time low! Let us call to the stand, the witnesses who might speak for the defence!

Let us begin with Jesus own mother. She would be a prejudiced witness, of course, and yet we can have Mary report what God's own angel told her about the Child to which she was to give birth. ***That Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.***<sup>1</sup> "Conceived by the Holy Spirit," her Child was the holy Son of God Himself.

Let us ask the angels of Bethlehem for their witness, and they tell us in Luke 2:11, <sup>11</sup> ***"For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*** The Lord's own Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed of God — that is what they said He was.

Follow through to that one incident recorded from His childhood. Was this Child ever a problem to His parents? Did He have a juvenile record on the police records of Nazareth? Scripture says that Jesus ***"was subject"*** to His parents and that Jesus ***"increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man."***<sup>2</sup>

And what about His public life, from the time of His Baptism in the Jordan up to the last days of His great Passion? If ever a man lived in a glass house, under constant observation, it was our Lord Jesus Christ. He was literally "shadowed" by spies from the camp of His enemies day in and day out.

Often they would "plant" a man in the crowd with instructions to ask some "tricky" sort of question so that they might hear something they could use against Him. And yet, after three years of public speaking, teaching, preaching, and healing, Jesus could challenge His worst enemies with the question, ***"Which of you convicts Me of sin?"***<sup>3</sup> Nobody could answer that challenge!

This is something so amazing that this itself should have convinced them that Jesus was what He claimed to be. Of the entire human race it has always been and will always be true that ***"all we like sheep have gone astray;"*** that all ***"we have turned everyone to his own way;"***<sup>4</sup> that ***"there is not a just man on earth who does good And does not sin;"***<sup>5</sup> and yet of this one member of the human race, flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, it can, and it must be said, that He was without sin. How, then, we ask, could this Man be condemned to the vile death of crucifixion?

Well, let us call the others to the stand now, the witnesses for the prosecution, to hear what they have to say. Think of His trial that night before the church court of the Jews. When the high priest asked Him about His disciples

and His doctrine, Jesus answered and said in John 18:21, <sup>21</sup> ***“Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said.”***

So they had to try another course. The Bible tells us, ***“But at last two false witnesses came forward” “and bore false witness against Him.”***<sup>6</sup> And what was their testimony? Here is one, ***“This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.’”***<sup>7</sup> The other one said, ***“We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.’”***<sup>8</sup>

Now, Christ had indeed said something which sounded like that, namely, that if they destroyed the temple of His body, He would rise again the third day. What these two witnesses therefore said was a complete distortion of the facts. No wonder the Scripture says, <sup>59</sup> ***“But not even then did their testimony agree.”***<sup>9</sup>

Or follow along to the other trial, the one early in the morning before the secular court of Pontius Pilate, without whose consent the death penalty could not be carried out.

In Pilate’s presence the chief priests and elders screamed all sorts of accusations at Christ, but after careful questioning the governor had to say in Luke 23:14, ***“You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him.”***

Then think of Pilate’s wife, who sent a special message to her husband, saying, ***“Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him.”***<sup>10</sup>

And on the cross itself, listen to the penitent thief, ***“And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.”***<sup>11</sup>

And finally, after His eyes were already closed in death, that Roman army captain who had been in charge of the whole crucifixion looked up once more and said, ***“Certainly this was a righteous Man.”***<sup>12</sup>

There is nothing else like it in all human history. Jesus was the one and only man who ever lived a perfectly holy and sinless life, yet He was nailed to a cross like the vilest criminal.

The hymnist writes,

Many hands were raised to wound Him,<sup>13</sup>  
None would interpose to save;  
But the deepest stroke that pierced Him  
Was the stroke that Justice gave.

Christ still suffers from that same sort of human injustice today. There are all too many people who condemn Christ, reject Christ, and shut Christ out of their lives, without ever having given Him a fair trial.

There is a story about an unbeliever, who had just completed an eloquent speech against Christianity before a large audience. *“And now, does anyone have any questions?”* An old man, who had recently been converted, shuffled down the aisle and went up to the platform. Taking an orange from his pocket, he began to peel it. The lecturer asked him to state his question, but the old man just went on, peeling his orange and eating it section by section.

Finally, wiping his hands on his handkerchief, the old man turned to the unbeliever and said, *“Now, here’s my question. Can you tell me, was that orange sweet or sour?”* *“Idiot!”* retorted the unbeliever, *“how would I know? I didn’t taste it!”* To which the old man replied: *“And how can you know anything about Christ if you have never tried Him?”* Exactly! Can you see the point?

A pastor said that after 18 years in the work of the ministry he has yet to meet a single Christian who has told him that he regrets having become a child of God through faith in Christ. We all know many people, on the other hand, who would never exchange what they have in Christ, namely forgiveness of sins, peace, joy, and hope — for all that the world could possibly offer them.

And so, simply from the standpoint of being fair, the wisest thing to do is what Scripture invites us to do, as we read in Psalm 34:8, ***“Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!”*** That is just plain ordinary justice. We all want to be fair. Give the Lord Jesus a real hearing and a real trial in your life. Do that sincerely, and I can guarantee that, by the grace

of God, you will never for a single moment regret it; in fact, you will be thankful in all eternity!

## 2. Cut Off Without Justice

### The Justice Of God Reached An All-Time High

Listen again to the prophet, or rather God's voice speaking through the prophet, *For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.*

We heard before that *"among His generation,"* among those who lived at His time and even saw Him suffer and die, there were few indeed who stopped to consider why Jesus was thus unjustly cut off from the land of the living.

We dare not follow their unjust example today, for that which took place on *"the old rugged cross"* is worthy of our deepest consideration and our most devout meditation. And what is it especially that we should consider and upon which we should meditate? Well, we should earnestly inquire into the reason why Jesus died, why a man perfectly holy, sinless, and without any fault whatsoever, should have to die like the vilest sort of criminal.

Is it enough to say that He was cut off without justice, that He died only because human courts and human witnesses and human judges made the most fearful blunder of all the ages?

If that was the only answer, then we ought to change the name of the day of His death and call it Black Friday, for surely it would then be the blackest page ever written on the pages of the volume of justice.

But, thank God, we don't have to change the name; we can continue to call it Good Friday. And why? The prophet answers, *For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.* The deepest stroke that pierced Jesus was indeed the stroke that Justice gave, and yet in the overruling providence of God even the injustice of man was made to serve the justice of God.

Jesus who died on Calvary's cross died not for sins of His own, for He had none, but for the sins of others, *"the Just for the unjust,"* as Scripture says in 1 Peter 3:18. The holy Son of God for the unholy sons of men.

It is not enough therefore simply to say that Christ died; it is not even enough to say that Christ died for sinners (because other men have also died for their fellow men); no, Christ died for all sinners because He had offered Himself as

the perfect ransom price for all mankind. Only in this way could the justice of God be fully satisfied.

Wherever there is sin, somebody has to pay, somebody has to suffer, somebody has to die! It cannot be otherwise, because ***“the wages of sin is death.”***<sup>14</sup> God cannot, God will not, permit His holiness to be trifled with; His words must be fulfilled. In the willing and loving sacrifice of His own Son, therefore, the justice of God reached an all-time high — a high which human justice can never reach, for in God, justice and love combined to bring about the salvation of man.

And since we are talking about justice, let us realise, too, that when the Saviour was stricken for our transgressions, He was stricken also for our sins of injustice. We read in Luke 6:37, <sup>37</sup> ***“Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”***

What kind of judging, what kind of condemning is forbidden here? There are certain kinds of judging and condemning which we must do, which we cannot avoid. For example, Scripture itself tells us that we must judge doctrine and condemn that which is false. ***“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”***<sup>15</sup> We are to test them on basis of God’s clear Word. That kind of judging, that kind of condemning we must carry on.

Again, we must certainly also judge between right and wrong, condemning that which is evil and clinging to that which is good.

But when the Saviour said, ***Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned,***” He was speaking of something else. Perhaps an example will help to make that more clear.

Many years ago a famous teacher, asked a student in his classroom to stand and read. He did so, holding the book in his right hand. The teacher told him to take the book with the other hand, but still the student read on with the book in his right hand. Again the angry professor thundered at him to hold the book in his left hand.

Finally the student said, “*I cannot, sir,*” and from behind his back he brought an empty sleeve; he had no left hand. In his own mind that professor had judged and condemned his student for disobedience before he knew that there was an empty sleeve behind his back. Needless to say, he made a deep and earnest apology.

So, all too often, it happens in our own lives. Without knowing the facts behind a certain man’s words or action; without knowing the weakness or frailty which may have caused him to do as he did; in other words, without seeing the sleeve which has no arm in it, we, too, pronounce our rash judgments and our over-critical condemnations, as if we were in the place of the all-seeing God Himself!

For such transgressions, too — and let us never forget it — our Saviour was stricken on Calvary’s tree!

Cut off without justice so that every sinner might be justified before God — that is the great truth of our text. How wonderful indeed, yes, wonderful beyond compare, is the love of the suffering Servant of God! Because He was willing to suffer unjustly, I can stand before my God justified, just-as-if-I’d never sinned! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 1:35

<sup>2</sup> Luke 2:52

<sup>3</sup> John 8:46

<sup>4</sup> Is. 53:6

<sup>5</sup> Ecclesiastes 7:20

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 26:60; Mark 14:57

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 26:61

<sup>8</sup> Mark 14:58

<sup>9</sup> Mark 14:59

<sup>10</sup> Matt. 27:19

<sup>11</sup> Luke 23:41

<sup>12</sup> Luke 23:47

<sup>13</sup> Hymn 70 v2

<sup>14</sup> Romans 6:23



