**BY HIS WOUNDS WE ARE HEALED**

(Isaiah 53:5)

“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.”

(v. 5)

            Today’s passage is called “The Song of God’s Suffering Servant.” Among the Old Testament, this passage is one of the most cited passages by New Testament authors. The passage amazingly depicts the vivid picture of the Messiah’s suffering and its meaning. The author, Isaiah, wrote the Book of Isaiah almost 700 years before Jesus. Isaiah's name means “the LORD saves.” He is considered the prince of the prophets. Jerome, an early Christian theologian, called Isaiah a preacher rather than a prophet because he so clearly wrote about Christ and his church with writing rather than predicting future events but describing what already happened. In today’s passage, we can see that Isaiah prophesied the Messiah’s suffering as if he already saw the events in his days. We can mainly think about the humiliation of the Messiah, the suffering of the Messiah, and the glory of the Messiah. May God bless us to accept the meaning of Jesus’ suffering and death in our hearts deeply!

            First, Jesus became a man of sorrow. (vs.1-3) Read verse 1. **“Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”** The author laments the fact that most people will not believe his message about the Messiah, and so few will acknowledge that the message is coming from God and his strength. It’s so surprising and sad that nobody believed the message, although the message is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes. (Romans 1:16) Why did people not believe the message? Look at verse 2. **“He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.”** The author explains that nothing about the Messiah’s appearance would automatically attract a large following. People of his time had some ideas about the Messiah’s appearance and his human background based on their own standards. Contrary to their expectations, the Messiah’s appearance and human status were not like that of a royal person.

            As a result, how did they treat Jesus? Look at verse 3. **“He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.”** The nation Israel and people despised and rejected Jesus, who experienced suffering and pain. The NKJV translated **“a man of suffering and familiar with pain”** as **“A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.”** He became a kind of person that people do not normally want to look at. People did not respect him. They did not think he was important, yet he was and is the most important Person in the world.

            Why would God have his Messiah be despised and rejected like this? Why was he “a man of sorrows”? Perhaps it was because of how people treated him. More than that, it expresses how he understood others. Simply, he identified with suffering people. He understood disadvantage, failure, sickness, tragedy, and all our sorrowful human experiences. Because he shared in our humanity, he could relate to the hurting and sorrowful. In this way, the arm of the Lord reached even more people through his Servant.

            People often say, “How do you know my pain? How do you understand my loneliness, my wounds, and my sorrow?” They don't know. They cannot know unless they experience the situation themselves. But Jesus knows us. He can understand. Why? Because Jesus himself lived a life that was the most despised, scorned, and rejected in the world."

            Jesus was born in a manger in Bethlehem. He spent his childhood as the son of a poor carpenter, Joseph. He ministered in Galilee, where he was despised and scorned. Jesus grew up without much material wealth. He likely spoke with a Galilean accent, which might have led to ridicule. Despite delivering gracious words, Jesus was often dismissed. People would say, "Can anything good come from Galilee?" or mockingly ask, "Isn't he the son of Joseph the carpenter?" At times, people turned away from Jesus as if he were a leper. This was because those who followed him were often the marginalized: the sick, the sinners, tax collectors, fishermen, and the lowly. Finally, He was betrayed by one of his disciples and abandoned by them. Jesus was despised and rejected on the Cross. Even he was forsaken by his beloved Father. So Jesus cried out, ***“…Eli, Eli,* *lema* *sabachthani?”* (which means “My God, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”). (Matthew 27:46)**

            Because Jesus experienced such rejection, he understands our suffering. He knows our diseases, pains, and wounds, sympathizes with us deeply and shows us mercy. Hebrews 4:15 says, **“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.”**

            There are many people in the world who carry unseen sorrows, heartaches, feelings of isolation, and despair, as well as the pain of being rejected. Who can know, understand, comfort, heal, and help them? Only Jesus can. Because Jesus endured more scorn than anyone else and he suffered rejection, abandonment, and great suffering, he understands our pain. Sometimes each one of us may think that nobody understands my suffering and pain. But Jesus, though the most glorious and rich, became poor, lowly, and despised, so he understands us. This Jesus causes a tender shoot to sprout from a cut-down tree trunk. He brings forth the sprout of hope. He nurtures it to grow into a flower, and bear fruit. This Jesus still invites us, weary and burdened as we are in life. **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).** We must come before our Lord, who knows us and loves us in our hearts, and lay down all the burdens of our lives, all our suffering and pain. Then, the Lord will embrace us, comfort us, and give us true rest. We believe that he will give us true hope.

            Second, Jesus took up our pain and bore our suffering. Look at verse 4: **“Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.”** People completely misunderstood the Messiah. They believed his suffering was due to his own issues. However, Jesus not only understood our suffering and pain, but he also took it upon himself and endured it. Pain and suffering are all consequences of human sinfulness.

            Read verse 5. **“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.”** Here, "transgressions" refer to violations against God’s moral and ethical laws. "Iniquities" denote the inner depravity and perversion of our sinful nature. The servant did not commit any wrongdoing. However, he was treated violently because of our inward wickedness and outward rebellious actions against God. The Holy God took our sins so seriously that he laid upon Jesus the sins of us all!

            How could such things happen to a person like Jesus? The psalmist lamented this pain, saying, **“But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people.”** (Psalm 22:6). Enduring ridicule and shame is incredibly difficult. Yet our Jesus endured it all. He endured being slapped, spat upon, and much more. He endured being whipped until his body was torn apart, his skin ripped off, his veins burst, and he was covered in blood, but he bore it all. Covered in wounds and blood, he carried the heavy cross up Golgotha's hill. Roman soldiers mercilessly whipped him. Yet Jesus didn't resist but silently continued the path of the Cross. His hands and feet nailed to the cross. He suffered the greatest pain and agony that a human could endure.

            Why did the sinless Son of God, Jesus, have to endure such intense suffering and die miserably on the cross? The reason is simple: to bear our shameful, filthy, and heavy burden of sin on our behalf. Without doing so, our wicked sins wouldn't be forgiven, and our wounded souls wouldn't be healed. He bore it all, carried it all, took responsibility for it all, and walked the path of death himself. **“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (6)**

            The Apostle Peter spoke about Jesus' crucifixion in this way: **"He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed"** (1 Peter 2:24). When Jesus was nailed to the cross and died, our sins also died with Him. Our pride, selfishness, jealousy, hatred, lust, complacency, indifference, lies, and hypocrisy—all our sins—were forgiven and wiped away because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. The price of sin is death, and someone had to pay that price. Jesus paid it for us. Through His death on the cross, we became righteous. Despite our unrighteousness, we received righteousness because of Jesus, because of His cross. This is the grace of substitution. We may serve as substitutes for someone else, help carry out tasks for them a few times. But could we ever die as a substitute for someone else? Could we endure shame, mockery, and punishment on behalf of others? It's impossible. Yet Jesus, for us sinners, bore the punishment as our substitute. Jesus is the only person holy, innocent, and unstained by sin. He was the only one who could suffer in our places and truly take away our sins. This is the love of God. An incomprehensible and immeasurable love of God. God's love, which gave up even His life to redeem us, to make us righteous, is beyond our limited understanding and reason. We can only accept by faith and praise this love. Through the suffering of this servant, now we can be free from our guilt (10) and have deep inner peace with God. It’s real forgiveness, from God himself.

            When Jesus was oppressed and afflicted, he did not open his mouth, like a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before its shearers. When he was arrested and on trial, being accused of many things by the chief priests, Jesus made no further answer, and Pilate was amazed (Mark 15:3–5). When he died, he was assigned a grave with the wicked and unrighteous rich though he had done no violence. (7-9) So John the Baptist proclaimed, **“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”**

            We need to Look to this suffering servant, not just once in a while, but every day. Often, we’re living in guilt about many things, past and present. We need to behold God’s servant, who took away all our sin and guilt when he suffered and died in our place. Then we can experience God’s peace and begin acting out of genuine love. Verse 5b says again, **“…and by his wounds we are healed.”** Do I need healing? According to this verse, I do; we all do. The wounds from events, people, or our sins are invisible, but they’re real, and they’re deep. But Isaiah repeatedly says that God wants to heal us. But how? We need to “behold” Jesus. We need to come before him honestly and look to him in faith. As we look at his wounds, we begin to experience his love. His suffering and death in our place is the greatest love ever known. The deeper we accept it, the more his love cures us.

            There is a story like this. There was a child in a village. He was usually very cheerful and lively. However, he became withdrawn and disliked socializing with friends from some point on. Later, he didn't even want to go to school. No matter how much his mother tried to persuade and rebuke him, it was in vain. Finally the child cried out loud and explained why he didn't want to go to school. It was because kids at school teased him, calling him the son of a monster, saying that his mother's face looked like a monster.

            At that moment, the mother explained to her son why her face had become so disfigured. “My son, your mother used to be considered beautiful in the past. But when you were just a newborn, I left you at home and went out. Then, the house caught fire. The flames were so fierce that everyone was running around desperately. But I couldn't just leave you there to die, so I jumped into the flames. I grabbed you and ran out, but I got burned, and that's why my face looks like this.” Hearing this, the son shed tears and said, “Mom, I'm sorry. It's my fault. I won't ever hurt your feelings again.” Since then, the son thought of his mother more proudly than anyone else. Even if his friends teased him, he didn't shy away. He proudly told them that his mother, who had suffered burns to save him, was someone to be grateful for. “I'm no longer ashamed of my mother's disfigured face. My mother became like this to save me. My mother is the most beautiful person in the world!”

            In order to save her son, who could only die in the fire, the mother did not hesitate even if her face became distorted like a monster. Her love for her child led her to leap into the fire, not caring if her flesh burned and her face became disfigured like a monster. It was the sacrificial love of the parents towards their child. Isn't that love the same as the love of Jesus towards us? As we've seen in the images, Jesus endured being whipped, wore a crown of thorns, and was crucified with his body torn and nailed to the cross, appearing truly monstrous and worm-like. Isaiah 52:14 says, **“Just as there were many who were appalled at him—his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness—.”** It's a chilling sight. Jesus suffered such agony, humiliation, horror, and death to take on our sins, to save us from the terrifying judgment of hellfire. How can we be ashamed of this Jesus? Instead, we should be thankful and proud of Jesus. The Cross of Jesus has the power to transform even cold-blooded murderers like Saul, who led the stoning of Stephen, into loving shepherds. That's why Paul confessed in 1 Corinthians 1:23-24, “**…but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”**

            Therefore, we must love the cross of Jesus. We must boast in the cross. We must diligently proclaim the Gospel of the cross. We should not just appreciate him from a safe distance but imitate him daily. Peter writes: **“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.**” (1 Peter 2:21–23) When we know Christ’s suffering for us, we no longer live for sin; we start truly living for righteousness (1 Peter 2:24) by following in Jesus’ footsteps and participating in his suffering.

            Third, Jesus won the victory after his suffering. (vs. 10-12) The Messiah suffered such abuse, such humiliation. It was the greatest injustice ever done. But it was not the end. Read verses 10–11. **“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. 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.”** This looks forward to the servant’s resurrection from the dead, and, to the abundant spiritual fruit of changed lives that his suffering will produce. (John 12:24)

            Read verse 12. **“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.”** The servant song ends on a note of victory. God will make his servant like a conqueror. We can know that the cross is beautiful and glorious. Through the sacrifice of Jesus, many new lives have been born. The pleasing will of God has been fulfilled. Likewise, the noble tears, sweat, and toil shed to save one soul, the dedication of time and resources – it is never in vain. It becomes the foundation for another life to be born. After the suffering of the cross comes the awaited resurrection to eternal life. Let us all follow this path. Jesus' cross is my cross, Jesus' resurrection is my resurrection, Jesus' salvation is my salvation, Jesus' eternal life is my eternal life. As we follow the path of the cross taken by Jesus, may we overcome the temptation of sin, become holy, and attain resurrection glory.

            We must never forget that we have been saved and made new not by our own merit but through the grace of the Lord. “**For it is by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:8)** – we must not make the grace of the Lord in vain. Our life, purchased with the precious blood of Jesus, is a gift beyond measure. How then shall we live? The Apostle Paul confessed, **“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me”** (1 Corinthians 15:10). We must strive to bear the grace we have received, dedicating ourselves to the work of the Lord, being faithful in rescuing souls redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus. If the Lord has given us the noble life from the cross for our sake, then we must be faithful in the ministry of bringing life to souls, for this is the grace of participating in the remaining sufferings of the Lord. May we pray to be led down the path of the cross taken by the Lord, which is the path of life, truth, and ultimately, resurrection. Though it may be narrow and rugged, it leads to eternal life, and thus, may we resolve to walk this path throughout our lives!