CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
DECEMBER21 2024

Scripture Story: Isaiah 53; 61; Zechariah 7; 8.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 59.

the servant hero



PEARL/LIGHTSTOCK

flashlight

"For more than a thousand years the Jewish people had waited the coming of the promised Saviour. Their brightest hopes had rested upon this event. For a thousand years, in song and prophecy, in temple rite and household prayer, His name had been enshrined; and yet when He came, they did not recognize Him as the Messiah for whom they had so long waited" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 710).

keytext

"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."

(Isaiah 53:3, NIV)

what do you think?

What makes a great hero?

Create a list of character traits, qualities, and skills that you think heroes possess:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

did you know?

Isaiah 53, one of the passages we're studying this week, is one of the sections of the book of Isaiah usually known to Bible scholars as the "suffering servant songs." These poems describe a servant of the Lord who will bring deliverance and peace to God's people through His own suffering.

During Jesus' ministry on earth, the prophecies of Isaiah were among the most important scriptures that He used in explaining His mission and role to His followers. The Gospel writers used quotes from Isaiah to show that the Scriptures pointed forward to Jesus.

Jews in Jesus' time were expecting a superhero Messiah—one who would defeat the occupying Roman forces and establish Himself as king of Israel. But Jesus showed that the Messiah was to be God's suffering servant—a humble leader who conquered by showing love and suffering on behalf of others.

The prophecies of Isaiah and the later prophecies of Zechariah look forward to a future time when love and peace will draw people from all over the world to learn from Israel's God. Those prophecies were partly fulfilled with the coming of Jesus, and will reach their final fulfillment when He comes again.

INTO THE STORY

"The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor."

"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. 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.

"Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. 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. 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.

"He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. . . . He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

". . . 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 61:1-3; 53:2-11, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

According to Isaiah 61:1, what was Jesus' mission?

_____

_____

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What effect would Jesus' ministry have on the people of Israel?

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According to Isaiah 53, how would people feel about Jesus?

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What would Jesus' suffering accomplish for Israel?

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How many ways can you think of in which the prophecies in these passages were fulfilled by Jesus during His life here on earth?

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What does this passage say to us regarding the suffering that we experience?

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punch lines

"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope" **(Isaiah 42:1-4, NIV).**

"[Jesus] said to them, 'How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" **(Luke 24:25-27, NIV).**

further insight

"On every hand are the needy and distressed. It is ours to aid in relieving and softening life's hardships and misery."—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 719

"The message of hope and mercy is to be carried to the ends of the earth."

—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 719

Sabbath

Read Isaiah 53:2, 3.

God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. . . . He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to heaven to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things" (Fundamental Belief 4, The Son).

Some heroes are admirable because they're good-looking, strong, powerful, or have amazing abilities. What does today's Bible passage say about Jesus?

Jesus wasn't your typical superhero. People weren't attracted to His good looks or His amazing strength. Instead, it was His compassion that drew people to Him—His ability to suffer along with people. He was no comic book superhero, but a true servant leader.

Sunday

Read Isaiah 53 and Isaiah 61.

Based on what you read in today's Bible passages, write a description of the mission of the Messiah:

Monday

Read Isaiah 53:3; Luke 10:21; John 15:11; and John 17:13.

The *Key Text* says that the Messiah would be "a Man of sorrows" (NKJV).

What quality of Jesus is mentioned in today's Bible passages? _____

How could Jesus be both a joyful person and also a "man of sorrows"? Explain.

Tuesday

Read John 1:11 and Isaiah 53:2.

The *Flashlight* section of our lesson tells us that even though the Jews had been looking forward to the Messiah's coming for more than 1,000 years, they didn't recognize Jesus as the Messiah when He came. Why do you think they didn't accept Jesus as the Messiah? What did they expect their Messiah to be and to do? Why do you think they had those expectations?

Sometimes God's answers to our prayers don't look like what we expect, either. Like the Jewish people in Jesus' time, we can get so hung up on expecting God to work in a certain way that we don't even recognize His answers when they come.

Wednesday

Read Isaiah 42:1-4 from the *Punch Lines* section of the lesson. This passage is another of the "suffering servant" songs in Isaiah. Look back at your Messiah job description in Monday's section of the lesson. What could you add to that description after reading Isaiah 42?

Thursday

Read John 14:12-14.

Jesus' life demonstrated how a servant could also be a leader. No, He didn't kick out the Romans and reestablish the throne of Israel. But through suffering, and caring for those who were suffering, He changed the world forever.

Jesus calls us to follow His example—to lead by caring for others, even if it involves suffering ourselves. What is one practical thing you can do today to help others who are suffering? What will it cost you to do it?

Friday

Read Mark 11:24.

Take a look back at what we said about expectations in Tuesday's lesson. Can you think of a situation in your life in which you have been expecting God to act in a certain way? What did you expect God to do for you?

Is it possible that God might have a different plan than you expected? How can you keep your eyes and your heart open for God's leading? Remember that if the Jews of Jesus' time had read the prophecies of Isaiah more carefully, they might have been prepared to accept a Messiah who was going to suffer for them. Studying the Bible will help you recognize God's answers to your prayers, even if they don't fit your expectations!

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings, chapter 59.

**Royalty and Ruin* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it by going to www.cornerstoneconnections.net and clicking on "Conflict of the Ages series." By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.