

**Isaiah 52:13-53:12** Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. <sup>14</sup> As many were astonished at you-- his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind-- <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>1</sup> Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> 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? <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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.

It is pronounced *kol* in Hebrew, *pas* in Greek, *omnis* in Latin, and *alles* in German. It's the most superlative word in any language. What is it? In English, we pronounce it "all." It's closely related to total, complete, entire, everything. The whole Hog, the whole shebang, the whole ball of wax. All.

It's the most superlative word for the most superlative section in the Old Testament, which is Isaiah chapters 52:13-53:12, which has been named the Fourth Servant Song. He had it all. The first verse of our text states, "**Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted.**" A bit of a contrast in terms there; God is speaking of a servant being exalted. Who is this *servant* that would be high and lifted up? That description is found describing only one other person in the entire book of Isaiah, it's from chapter 6, where Isaiah describes the King of kings and Lord of lords. He writes, "**In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne high and lifted up.**" (1) A few verses later, this Lord seated on the throne is greeted by the cry of the seraphim, "**Holy, holy, holy.**" (3) In verse 5 the prophet calls Him, "**the king, the LORD of armies.**" This servant in chapter 52 and 53 and the Lord identified in chapter 6 are one and the same. This Servant is the same one who later would declare, "**I and my Father are one.**" This is Jesus being described in our text, the Servant who had it all.

And He would need it all, because the Fourth Servant Song before us today was originally intended for the sixth century Israeli exiles in Babylon. They were singing a different song than this one, that of Psalm 137:4. This was their refrain, ***“How can we sing the songs of Zion while in a foreign land?”*** Yes, the reality for the exiles seemed to be far away from the high and lifted up Savior; there reality was a bondage due to their addiction to sin.

And as we’ve been considering this entire Lent—we’re exiles too, in bondage to our sin as well. We become fixated on gossip, anger, grudges, worry, laziness, excuses, and selfishness. We find ourselves exiled, in bondage, and stuck in these vices. Like true addicts, we turn back to these behaviors again and again thinking that these things will bring us pleasure. And the result? We join Israel singing our depressing, deadly dirge, ***“How can we sing the songs of Zion while in a foreign land?”***

Well to such captives, Isaiah sings a different song. That of our text, ***“Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted.”*** Again, this is the Servant who had it all. As Paul writes to the Colossians, ***“In Christ all the fulness of the deity lives in bodily form.”*** (Colossians 2:9) Or in Hebrews, ***“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact imprint of His being.”*** (Hebrews 1:3)

Make no mistake—Jesus isn’t an assistant to the Father. He isn’t the vice president of the universe. Jesus isn’t the junior partner to the Father. No. He is a fullfledged member of the Godhead, one with the Father in every way, co-eternal and co-equal. In the Nicene Creed we rightly describe Jesus as ***“Being of one substance with the Father.”*** This Servant had it all in His grasp.

And this Servant gave it all. Isaiah 53 continues with these words. ***“He was stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. . . pierced. . . crushed. . . punished. . . led like a lamb to the slaughter. . . cut off from the land of the living. . . assigned a grave with the wicked.”*** That’s why our second verse says, ***“Many were astonished at you-- his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance.”*** This Servant had it all, and then He gave it all; every last drop of blood.

And this Servant delivers it all. Chapter 53 verse 11 of our text states, ***“by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.”*** The Servant delivers what captives need most—forgiveness. Forgiveness is at the heart of Isaiah’s own experience. He describes in chapter 6 of his book, grieving over his sin, that he was a ***“man of unclean lips.”*** And then he goes on to write, ***“Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, ‘See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.’”***

Likewise, from His altar called Calvary, God touches us with blood-bought forgiveness. God declares it. The Baptismal font has sealed it. The Lord’s Supper brings it directly to us. The Apostle Paul maintains this in Philippians 4:19, when he writes, ***“And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”*** All, total, complete, the whole ball of was. Everything, he had it. He gave it. And He delivered it to you, because it’s part of God’s plan.

Isaiah 53:10 states that this was all God’s good and gracious will for us. We ought to remember that this evening as we move through the events of Christ’s Passion. Good Friday isn’t just a moving

tragedy for us to watch and wail over. Nor is it a stopgap measure. Nor was it just the Father's knee-jerk reaction to a world that was plummeting towards destruction. This was God's will. The cross of Christ was drawn into God's original blueprint, written in as the climax of God's first script. Golgotha was the decisive plan of the Father before the creation of the world.

What does it mean? It means Jesus intentionally planted the tree from which His cross would be carved. It means He voluntarily placed his betrayer, Judas, into the womb of a mother. It means He was the One who set in motion the political machinery that sent Pilate to Judea and Herod to Jerusalem. And it means that He didn't *have* to do it, but He did it all for you and for me.

Our depressing, deadly dirge knows only bondage, captivity, and addiction. We cry out in anguish due to our sins, ***"How can we sing the songs of Zion while in a foreign land?"*** But this refrain is trumped in Isaiah's song which imparts forgiveness, freedom, and divine mercy. When the words of the Fourth Servant Song enter our ears and strike our hearts, we can't help but respond with the words of one more song, not written by Isaiah but by the hymnist Isaac Watts: *"Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were a tribute far too small! Love, so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all."* Amen.