



THE PRINCE OF PEACE

Who has believed our message? To whom has the Lord revealed his powerful arm? My servant grew up in the Lord's presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him. He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care. Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.

ISAIAH 53:1-6 (NLT)

OUR DEVOTIONAL

Growing up attending a Jewish synagogue, we were taught that the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 was metaphorically the Nation of Israel. Then in 1972, I listened to Jack Hayford teach that the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 was Jesus Christ. When I heard this for the first time, I started a journey of study that would eventually lead me to the amazing, thankful place of receiving Jesus as my Messiah.

This passage is magnificent. The prophet Isaiah, powered by the Holy Spirit, tells of the coming of the Messiah 800 years before it happened. It is so tragic that the Jewish people do not understand this text. It is about Jesus Christ. The coming Messiah will not show up in military strength and power that they are expecting. Instead, Isaiah says he will come as a suffering servant. This is not what they want to hear or see. Isaiah the prophet describes the life of the Messiah and His crucifixion: "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (vs. 3).

Can you see that Isaiah 53 combines the beginning and the end of Jesus' ministry? It combines His birth with His death. It combines the Incarnation—God coming to us in human form—with redemption and resurrection, reconciling Himself to us.

In verse 3, the word "acquainted" is from the Hebrew word "yada." This word has a wide range of meanings. In this context, it means Jesus had intimate, first-hand experience with pain and suffering. He wasn't just taking notes on our pain! The Messiah *experienced* our pain. He is no stranger to what we go through, and he has tasted it and has first-hand experience.

The Good News is that there is no valley of the shadow of death that any of us can go through that Messiah hasn't already gone through before us, walking alongside us. What Good News? The only way

peace with God will come to us is by God dealing head-on with our sin, and that is what He's done for us. He is the Prince of Peace, and He is the Suffering Servant.

God put an end to the hostility between Himself and sinful humanity at the cross when Jesus Christ, who knew no sin, became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Do you know that peace? Have you embraced Christ by faith to find it?

In His last teaching before He was crucified, Jesus told His disciples that the world wouldn't take kindly to followers of another King whose reign disrupted the powers and patterns of this world. "In the world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33). He also tells them, "I have said these things to you, that IN ME you may have peace" (v. 33). "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you" (John 14:27).

When Jesus appeared to His disciples in the Upper Room after the resurrection, do you remember his first words to them? "On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, PEACE BE WITH YOU" (John 20:19).

FAMILY MOMENT

Ask your children to describe what a "plan" is and how one is made. Here are some discussion ideas: a plan is something for the future. A plan is something you do when you are getting ready to do something. A plan is a list of things you need to do. A plan is like a recipe. After discussing what a plan is, ask your family to "plan" out a family day together. Everyone can contribute ideas, and mom or dad can write them out. You can encourage creativity, wild and crazy ideas. After this sharing time, go through and talk about what is practical and possible. Work together to come up with a real family day to happen soon.

Reread Isaiah 53 using an age-appropriate translation or paraphrase, and ask these questions:

1. What does this Bible passage tell us about God's plan for Jesus?
2. What does this Bible passage tell us about God's plan for us?
3. Discuss how God planned to save us and make us His sons and daughters. Explain how God intended for Jesus to come, die on the cross, and be raised from the dead.

PRAYER & REFLECTION

Do you hold expectations about what the Messiah "should" look like in your life? In what ways does the Jesus you see in Scripture match them or differ from them? Ask the Holy Spirit to align your expectations to the real Jesus.

Do you experience peace in the midst of the suffering that life sometimes brings? If not, ask the Lord to help you discover His peace in times of comfort and ease AND in times of suffering and uncertainty.